



AMERICANS  
for the ARTS

## National Arts Education Public Awareness Campaign Survey

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*This summer, Americans for the Arts, in partnership with the Advertising Council and the advertising agency GSD&M, is launching a multi-year, multi-media national advertising campaign raise public awareness and positively change the public's attitudes and actions about the value of the arts and arts education in the development of every child. In order to shape this important campaign, Americans for the Arts commissioned a national public opinion survey to determine public attitudes towards the arts and arts education.*

In this *Monograph*, the summary and analysis of a national survey convincingly demonstrate that an overwhelming majority of the American public believes in the value and importance of arts education to a child's development. However, many parents are satisfied with the amount of arts education their children receive at their school or in their community, leading to a sense of complacency about the need to support arts education. Moreover, the survey shows that most respondents do not know how to get involved in advocating for their child's arts education. These findings illustrate a need for a public awareness campaign to raise questions in parents' minds about the extent of their children's arts education and to compel them to take action and affect change in their school and their communities.

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*Monograph* is one of the benefits of membership in Americans for the Arts.

AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS

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## Background

In order to define a clear message that *will promote the value of the arts to a child's development*, Americans for the Arts had two distinct types of research projects completed for the national arts education public awareness campaign.

### Quantitative Research

Wirthlin Worldwide was commissioned to include a series of questions focused on arts education in their bi-monthly omnibus study, the *National Quorum*. The *National Quorum* is a simple, cost-effective, and timely tool designed to track issues of concern and test the effectiveness of advertising and public relations campaigns.

### Qualitative Research

A series of seven focus groups and six personal interviews were conducted in three selected markets (Seattle, Washington; Des Moines, Iowa; and Orlando, Florida) on January 22 through January 29, 2001. The focus groups targeted parents, teachers, and community leaders. The one-on-one interviews targeted administrative decision-makers, primarily school principals. Additionally, telephone interviews were conducted with local arts agency representatives with the goal of gaining an in-depth understanding of local arts and/or arts education programming in the schools and neighborhoods in these three markets.

## Objectives

The national arts education opinion survey was designed to meet three objectives.

- ① Verify the findings from the qualitative research efforts
- ② Benchmark current general attitudes towards the value of arts education prior to the implementation of Americans for the Arts' national public awareness campaign
- ③ Benchmark the grassroots actions currently being taken in support of arts education prior to the implementation of Americans for the Arts' national public awareness campaign

This *Monograph* presents the detailed findings from the quantitative research efforts.

## Executive Summary

There is support for and an excellent understanding of the value that arts education can provide a child. Ninety-five percent of survey respondents believe that the arts enhance learning; instill positive characteristics of creativity, self-expression, motivation, and independence; and are a great way to help children learn how to apply their skills.

When asked to consider the importance of selected activities to a child's overall education and development on a scale of one to 10 (one means that an activity is not at all important and 10 means the activity is very important), *"learning about and experiencing the arts"* received the fourth highest average rating (8.1). The highest rated activity is *reading for pleasure* (9.1), followed by *using computers for educational enrichment* (8.5), and *religious activities such as attending church or synagogue* (8.3).

Parents agree that schools are responsible for ensuring that children learn about and experience a variety of art forms; otherwise, there is no guarantee that children will receive any sort of arts education. Eighty-nine percent of survey respondents believe that arts education is important enough that schools should find the money to ensure inclusion in the curriculum.

While more than 76 percent of the respondents somewhat or strongly agree that arts education is important enough to get personally involved, only 35 percent of those who are closely involved in the life of a child have done so. Seventy-one percent of parents/guardians are satisfied with the amount of arts education their child receives in school or in their community. Seventy-one percent of all respondents believe there are other people and organizations in the community who are better suited to take action. More tellingly, 67 percent do not know how to get involved.

These findings demonstrate that while American adults understand its value, they feel that their children already receive a sufficient amount of arts education. Results also indicate the need for a well defined action agenda that parents can adopt to support their beliefs.

*Americans for the Arts defines arts education as learning and experiencing a variety of art forms, including music, dance, theater, and visual and literary arts.*

## Methodology

The quantitative survey results are based on 1,008 telephone interviews conducted with the American general public during the evening hours of February 16 through February 19, 2001. All respondents were 18 years of age or older. The average interview was 20 minutes in length. The interviews were conducted through Wirthlin Worldwide's 100-station computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) center in Orem, Utah.

## Profile of the Sample

The typical respondent is an employed, middle-aged Caucasian with children. Specifically:

<b>GENDER   STATUS</b>		<b>INCOME</b>	
Men	48%	Household income > or = \$30,000	48%
Women	52%	<b>RACE</b>	
Married	53%	Caucasian	78%
<b>AGE</b>		<b>POLITICS</b>	
Under 35	27%	Registered to vote	84%
35 - 54	37%	Democrat	48%
55 and Older	35%	Republican	40%
<b>CHILDREN</b>		Conservative	59%
No children	27%	Liberal	37%
At least three children	32%	<b>GEOGRAPHY</b>	
<b>EDUCATION</b>		South	31%
College Graduate	20%	Northeast	25%
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>		Midwest	23%
Employed	63%	West	14%
Not Employed	27%		
Retired	44%		
Homemaker	27%		

## Detailed Findings

The results of Americans for the Arts' national opinion survey are clear. Among adults, there is tremendous support for arts and arts education.<sup>1</sup> There is also a broad understanding of the value that arts education provides to children—the arts enhance learning; instill the positive characteristics of creativity, self-expression, motivation, and independence; and teach children how to apply their skills.

Unfortunately, while adults understand the important role that the arts can play in every child's education, this does not translate into active steps such as organizing a community group, contacting an elected official, or otherwise mobilizing arts support in the community.

Survey results are categorized here into groups addressing four characteristics.

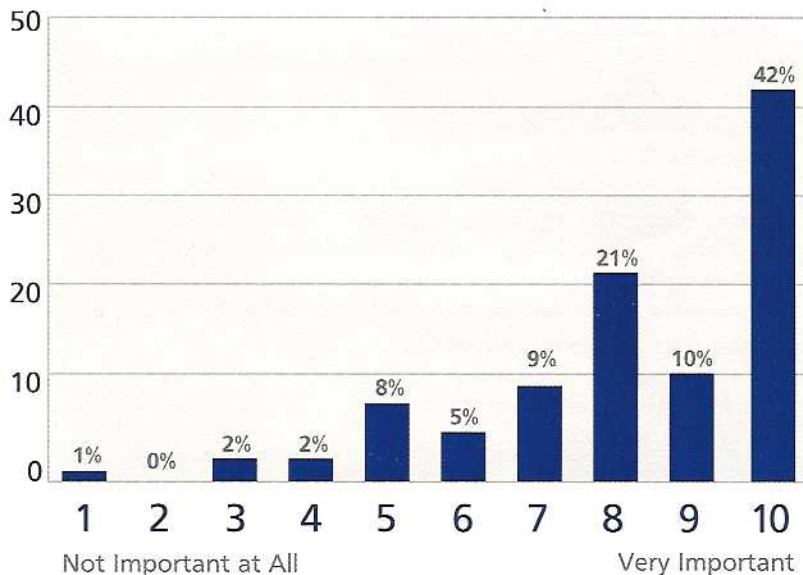
- 1 The **importance** of arts education
- 2 The **value** of arts education
- 3 The **level of satisfaction** with current arts education programs and resources
- 4 The **actions** taken by respondents to support arts education

### The Importance of an Arts Education

According to the survey, American adults believe that the arts are a critical component of school curriculum. Seventy-three percent

consider arts education to be very important to a child's development (eight to 10 on a scale of 10). Only 13 percent of respondents rate the overall importance of arts education in a child's development to be five or less out of 10.

The arts do more than rank well against other activities. American adults believe that the arts are an imperative component of school curriculum, and therefore schools must earmark appropriate funding for arts education programs.



### IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVITIES TO A CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT\*

Reading for pleasure	9.1
Using computers for educational enrichment	8.5
Religious activities like attending church or synagogue	8.3
<b>Learning about and experiencing the arts</b>	<b>8.1</b>
Joining peer groups such as the boy or girl scouts	7.7
Participating in competitive sports	7.6
Participating in individual hobbies such as stamp collecting	6.9
Surfing the Internet for fun	4.6

\* Average scores based on a scale of one to 10

<sup>1</sup> Respondents were asked if they are primarily involved in the life of a child under 18 years of age and, if so, to identify their role in that child's life. Results: parent/guardian (33 percent), grandparent (30 percent), caretaker (20 percent), and close relative (51 percent).

IMPORTANCE OF ARTS EDUCATION	
Art belongs to everyone, not just the fortunate or privileged.	96%
Arts are vital to providing a well-rounded education for our children.	91%
Arts education is important enough that schools should find money to ensure inclusion in the curriculum.	89%
Arts education is important enough to get personally involved in arts education in school.	76%
Incorporating the arts into education is the first step in adding back what is missing in public education today.	75%
Those who are closely involved in the life of a child who have gotten personally involved in arts education in school.	35%
The arts are important but too much money has been spent on them.	33%

*“As a parent and an educator, I daily witness the impact of the arts on the quality of education. As a parent, I see my child’s sense of self expand with every opportunity to experience the arts whether she is an observer or a participant. As an administrator, I see the energy, creativity, critical thinking, and achievement within the learning environment increase. . . .”*

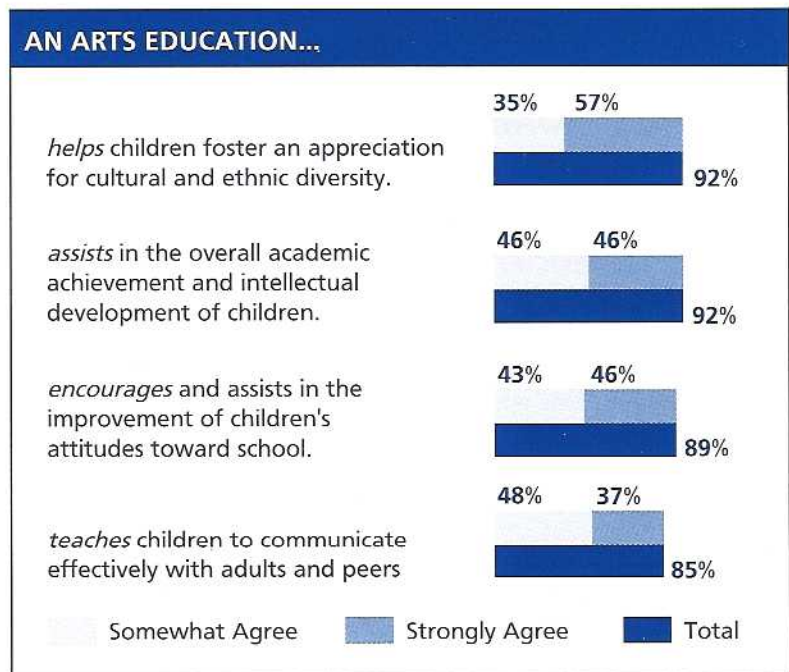
**JO ANNE HUGHES**  
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### The Value of Arts Education

American adults cite many reasons for the importance of arts education in a child’s development, including the belief that the arts teach children creativity, individualism, and communication skills. Americans also believe that the arts encourage improvement in children’s attitudes toward school and help children appreciate cultural and ethnic diversity—topics of heightened importance in the wake of recent instances of violence in our nation’s schools.

BELIEF IN ARTS EDUCATION	
Arts teach intangibles like creativity, self-expression, and individualism.	95%
Arts are an integral tool for helping children learn more effectively.	89%
Arts provide much needed balance for children who are being forced to grow up more and more quickly.	81%
Arts education provides a competitive edge for getting a job in the future.	74%

Americans also agree that children are personally and positively affected by the arts.



Additionally, respondents involved in children's lives were asked to consider the impact that arts education has on a child's development.

**CHILDREN\***

Better realize their talents	8.3
Better know how to think creatively	8.3
Become more open-minded	8.2
Gain a greater sense of accomplishment	8.1
Enjoy the learning process much more	8.0
Have a greater sense of self-esteem	7.9
Develop a certain wisdom and understanding about life	7.7
Apply their learning later in life	7.7
Be better equipped for success in the future	7.6

\* Average scores based on a scale of one to 10

## Satisfaction with Current Arts Education Programs

Respondents involved with children under 18 years of age are fairly equally satisfied with the amount of arts education—including dance, music, visual arts, theatre and literary arts—that their children receive at both their local school and through community arts organizations. Only 25 percent noted they were either somewhat or very dissatisfied with the programs.

Again, differences exist among the respondent subgroups:

Those respondents who are most *satisfied* with the arts education program at their local school tend to be college graduates who reside in the Midwest and who have two or more children.

Those respondents who are the most *dissatisfied* tend to be middle-aged African-American and Caucasian adults with some college experience.

School administrators and school board members (100 percent and 97 percent, respectively) are more satisfied than teachers and PTA officers (52 percent and 67 percent, respectively) with the amount of arts education children receive at their local school.

Seventy-one percent of parents/guardians are satisfied with the amount of arts education children are receiving at their local school, as compared to grandparents (69 percent), relatives (69 percent), and caretakers (68 percent).

### LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Satisfaction with arts programs provided by local schools

68%

70%

Satisfaction with arts programs provided by community arts organizations

*“Cooperative and collaborative learning are natural products of arts in education. Peer relationships and student-teacher relationships positively develop in this environment. . . . In a school that provides an arts education curriculum, students demonstrate an increase in motivation and effort in their academic endeavors. This leads to increases in critical thinking, including analysis, synthesis, and problem-solving. . . . Attendance improves and discipline referrals decline where students experience the arts.”*

JO ANNE HUGHES  
PRINCIPAL, WALNUT HILL ELEMENTARY  
DALLAS, TEXAS



### Actions Taken to Support Arts Education in Local Communities

While more than 75 percent of American adults somewhat or strongly agree that arts education is important enough to get personally involved in the schools, only a third of those who are regularly involved in the life of a child have taken an action in the past year with regard to arts education. Interestingly, a significant number responded that they were more likely to encourage the child to participate in a school or community activity rather than being proactive by taking a child to an arts program, organizing a community group, or contacting an elected official.

Actions most commonly taken in the past year with regard to arts education of children ranged from one of encouragement to a high degree of involvement.

Caretakers seem to take a more active approach in promoting the arts. Fifty-three percent said they have discussed arts education with other parents and/or concerned individuals in their community, compared to 46 percent of parents/guardians, 37 percent of relatives, and 29 percent of grandparents. Twenty-six percent of caretakers have spoken to a teacher or school principal about scheduling more arts programs at school compared to parents, other relatives, and grandparents (21, 16, and 13 percent, respectively).

ACTIONS TAKEN DURING THE PAST YEAR	
Encouraged child to participate in school or community arts programs	73%
Took child to school or community arts program	51%
Donated to school arts program or community arts program	35%
Discussed arts education with other parents and/or concerned individuals in my community	35%
Have not taken any action	27%
Volunteered with school or community arts program	23%
Raised money on behalf of arts in the community or in the school	16%
Spoke to a teacher or school principal about scheduling more arts programs at school	15%
Raised the issue at a PTA meeting or other community meeting	12%
Formed a group of parents/children/others in the community to support the arts	9%
Wrote a letter to the local school board or other government official requesting more arts programs in the school	4%

Of those respondents who are involved in the life of a child and have taken action, only 16 percent report being much more involved in these activities/actions this past year compared with other years. Nearly 60 percent of all respondents involved with a child say they are too busy or have too many demands on their time to get involved with arts education. However, 59 percent of both parents and caretakers say they are more involved at present in arts education than in past years.

When asked their reasons for *not taking more action* in regard to arts and education, 71 percent agreed *there are other people or organizations in the community who are better suited to take action*.

### REASONS FOR NOT TAKING ACTION

There are other people or organizations in the community who are better suited to take action.	71%
I am currently too busy or have too many demands on my time to get involved.	58%
The arts are important, but not as important as other core subjects.	57%
I do my part by taking my child to arts activities outside of school.	56%
There are other priorities that I feel have more importance than arts education.	56%
I don't know how to get involved with arts education.	34%
I don't think there is anything I can do to personally affect change.	31%
I don't feel that my involvement will result in a serious benefit for the child.	29%

*Americans for the Arts is the nation's leading arts information clearinghouse, with a 40-year record of objective arts industry research. As the preeminent arts advocacy organization, it is dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts.*

### Conclusion

The most compelling information revealed in Americans for the Arts' national arts education opinion survey is that parents appreciate the importance to a child's development of learning about and experiencing the arts. Parents also believe that the arts are an essential tool for learning; they fulfill an important role in creating well-rounded individuals and establish a greater understanding of our surroundings and ourselves. In short, parents say that no young person should be without the arts.

Further, there is a fear that without the arts children will learn only to obey orders and not function on their own. As the educational system becomes more homogenized and focused on standardized test results, art serves a key role in making up for what parents recognize as shortcomings in education by providing a conceptual understanding of the world to complement a more quantitative education. Finally, having a known plan of action, a supportive community, and tangible "ammunition" is crucial to getting someone to actively support the arts.

### Next Steps

Americans for the Arts is developing a national, multi-media public awareness campaign designed to increase the public's active involvement in championing arts education in schools and community programs. Parents already believe in the importance of supporting arts education. However, they do not believe that there is a problem with the amount of education their children currently experience in the arts. Many parents believe that as long as their child has had *some* art, that's all they need. This campaign will clarify why a fuller arts education should be available to all children and will provide information on how parents and community leaders can advocate for it.

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