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Cultivating *Creativity*

CPS Arts Education Plan 2.0

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Letter from the Mayor

May 6th, 2025

Fellow Chicagoans,

The City of Chicago has always been a city of artists, visionaries, and change-makers, a place where creativity shapes our culture, our economy, and our communities. As Mayor of Chicago, I am proud to support the CPS Arts Education Plan 2.0: Cultivating Creativity, a commitment to ensuring that every child in every neighborhood has access to a high-quality arts education that inspires, empowers, and prepares them for the future.

The arts are not a luxury; they are essential to a quality education. The arts spark innovation, build confidence, strengthen communities, and drive economic opportunity. A city as vibrant and creative as Chicago must reflect those values in its schools. Every CPS student deserves the chance to explore their creative potential, develop critical thinking skills, and engage with the inspiring artistic traditions that make our city one of the cultural capitals of the world.

This plan ensures that arts education is not only available but equitable and sustainable, expanding access to high-quality instruction, supporting the educators who bring creativity into our classrooms, and strengthening partnerships between our schools and the city's renowned arts institutions. It reflects our belief that investing in the arts is an investment in our young people, our workforce, and the future of Chicago itself.

I applaud Chicago Public Schools, the Department of Arts Education, and the countless educators, students, families, and arts leaders who contributed to this vision. The City of Chicago stands with you in making arts education a priority. Together, we will ensure that Chicago remains a city where every child has the opportunity to learn, create, and thrive through the arts.

Sincerely,



Brandon Johnson
Mayor, City of Chicago

Letter from CPS Board of Education

May 6th, 2025

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As President of the Chicago Board of Education, I am honored to introduce the *CPS Arts Education Plan 2.0: Cultivating Creativity*, a bold and forward-thinking vision for the future of arts education in Chicago Public Schools. This plan represents our collective commitment to ensuring that every CPS student, regardless of background, school, or neighborhood, has access to a high-quality arts education that enriches their academic journey, fosters their creativity, and prepares them for success in an evolving world.

The arts are not just an enhancement to education; they are a fundamental component of a well-rounded, equitable learning experience. Research consistently shows that arts education improves academic achievement, strengthens social-emotional development, and empowers students with critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In a city as culturally rich as Chicago, we must leverage our arts institutions, community partnerships, and talented educators to provide every student with meaningful opportunities to create, express, and innovate.

This plan builds on more than a decade of progress while addressing historic inequities in access to arts learning. Through strategic investments, stronger curriculum integration, strong arts partnerships, and expanded educator support, CPS will establish a sustainable, district-wide model that ensures arts education is a right, not a privilege. We recognize that a thriving arts ecosystem requires collaboration, and we are proud to stand alongside educators, families, students, and community leaders to bring this vision to life.

The *CPS Arts Education Plan 2.0* provides clear goals, priority areas, and actionable recommendations that will guide our work in the years ahead. By embedding the arts into every student's educational experience, we are investing in the next generation of creative leaders, innovative thinkers, and engaged citizens who will shape the future of our city.

I invite you to explore this plan, join us in this effort, and help us realize a future where every CPS student has access to the transformative power of the arts.

Sincerely,



Sean B. Harden, President
Chicago Board of Education
Chicago Public Schools

A Message from CEO Pedro Martinez and Chief Education Officer Bogdana Chkoumbova

Dear CPS Community,

It is with great pride that we join the Department of Arts Education in unveiling the *CPS Arts Education Plan 2.0: Cultivating Creativity*, a bold and visionary roadmap for the future of arts education in Chicago Public Schools.

As district leaders, we believe that the arts are essential to a high-quality education. When students engage in the arts—whether through music, dance, theatre, visual arts, or media arts—they develop critical thinking skills, creative confidence, and a deeper connection to themselves and the world around them. The arts cultivate empathy, inspire innovation, and offer our students powerful pathways to self-expression and academic achievement.

Our district's strategic plan, *Success 2029: Together We Rise*, centers on three core commitments: every student, every school, every community area. The *Arts Education Plan 2.0: Cultivating Creativity* brings that vision to life by ensuring that all CPS students, from PreK to 12th grade, have access to rigorous, joyful, and equitable learning experiences in and through the arts. These are not “extra” or “nice to have” experiences—they are foundational to developing well-rounded, thriving learners prepared for success in college, career, and civic life.

We are proud of the district-wide collaboration that shaped this plan—from teachers and principals to students, families, community partners, and cultural institutions. This collective vision ensures that arts education is not limited by zip code, school type, or budget—it is a right that every student deserves and a responsibility we share as a district.

We invite you to explore the plan, engage in the public conversations it inspires, and join us in realizing its goals. Together, we can build a school district where creativity flourishes in every classroom and every child is empowered to lead, learn, and express themselves through the transformative power of the arts.

Sincerely,



Pedro Martinez
Chief Executive Officer, Chicago Public Schools



Bogdana Chkoumbova
Chief Education Officer, Chicago Public Schools

Executive Summary

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is proud to introduce the *Arts Education Plan 2.0: Cultivating Creativity*—a bold and forward-looking five year vision that recommits to what is possible for arts education in every school, for every student, across every neighborhood. Building on the progress made since CPS adopted its first-ever Arts Education Plan in 2012, this new iteration marks a pivotal evolution: from expanding **access** alone to an intentional and urgent commitment to both access and **quality**.

Over the past decade, CPS has become a national model in broadening student access to the arts. Today, more students are enrolled in schools with certified arts educators, instruction in multiple art forms, and enriching partnerships with cultural institutions than ever before. But access alone is not enough. A student's zip code, background, or school type should never determine the depth, relevance, or rigor of their arts education. To fulfill the full promise of the arts, every student must experience high-quality, standards-aligned, and culturally responsive instruction that cultivates creativity, agency, and voice.

The *Arts Education Plan 2.0: Cultivating Creativity* lays the foundation for a new era of equity and excellence in CPS arts education, centered around two goals aligned with the structure of the Creative School Certification (CSC):

Goal 1: Access to Arts Education

Every student will have equitable access to sequential, developmentally appropriate arts instruction delivered by certified educators across a range of disciplines. The plan prioritizes improvements in staffing, instructional time,

arts course offerings, teacher recruitment and retention, school conditions, access to facilities and resources, and arts partnerships targeted to areas of greatest need.

Goal 2: High-Quality Arts Education

CPS will define, support, and scale high-quality instruction in the arts—grounded in rigorous curricula, meaningful assessments, effective instructional models, and sustained professional learning. This goal also underscores the importance of arts partnerships and introduces a new approach to measuring instructional quality through systems of data and research, ensuring continuous improvement and alignment with student needs.



A key shift in this plan is the recognition that what CPS has historically labeled as “quality” within the Creative Schools Certification has, in practice, been more accurately tied to access—focusing on inputs like staffing, minutes, and materials. This plan separates those access conditions from the core of instruction, and sets forth a clear framework to measure and support quality through five foundational levers: comprehensive arts curriculum, instructional approaches, professional learning, arts partnerships, and strengthening data systems.

This approach is guided by a simple but powerful thesis: **True equity in arts education requires that both access and quality be prioritized.** Access alone does not ensure students receive enriching, transformative experiences. Just as quality without access creates exclusivity, access without quality risks superficial engagement. By advancing both, CPS ensures that arts education becomes a vehicle for self-expression, academic achievement, and social-emotional development—empowering students to thrive as artists, critical thinkers, and leaders in their communities and beyond.

The *CPS Arts Education Plan 2.0: Cultivating Creativity* calls on the collective strength of our city arts education sector—educators, families, school leaders, cultural institutions, teaching artists, civic leaders, and philanthropic partners—to realize this vision. Together, we will ensure that every CPS student has the opportunity to engage deeply with the arts, not as an enrichment, but as a vital part of a well-rounded education and a foundation for a creative, just, and inspired future.

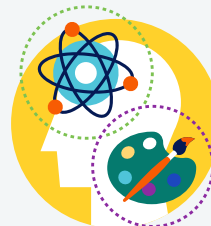


Portrait of a CPS Arts Graduate

A Chicago Public Schools arts education graduate emerges from a rich, developmentally aligned continuum of creative learning—shaped across grade bands to reflect the unique needs, interests, and growth of young people at every stage of their journey.



In **Grades PreK-2**, students begin their artistic journey through standards-aligned **creative exploration**. At this stage, they engage with the arts through play, imagination, and sensory experience. Whether painting to music, exploring movement through storytelling, or experimenting with rhythm and sound, students are encouraged to take creative risks in safe, joyful environments. These early experiences nurture curiosity, build confidence, and establish the foundation for self-expression.



In **Grades 3-5**, students expand their understanding through **arts integration projects**, connecting an art form and another subject area, meeting evolving objectives in both. They begin to connect artistic practice to the world around them—using visual art to explore geometry, writing songs to express historical understanding, or performing scenes that illustrate scientific concepts. In this phase, students learn that the arts are not isolated, but vital tools for communication, inquiry, and cross-disciplinary learning.



In **Grades 6-8**, the focus shifts to **exploratory choice**. Students are offered more autonomy to select artistic disciplines that resonate with their developing identities—whether visual arts, music, theater, dance, or media arts. With choice comes responsibility: they begin to build technical skills, engage in reflection and critique, and deepen their understanding of the artistic process. In this phase, students explore their unique voice, make connections, and find purpose through the arts.



In **Grades 9-12**, students pursue **artistic pathways** aligned with their passions, talents, and postsecondary aspirations. They have access to advanced coursework, industry-standard tools. Through public performance, exhibition, and collaboration, students learn to engage with audiences and communities, develop portfolios, and explore college and career options in the arts and beyond. The high school arts experience is rigorous, relevant, and affirming—preparing students for a lifetime of creative impact.

By graduation, a CPS student is not only artistically literate, but also a creative thinker, empathetic collaborator, and engaged citizen. They leave school with the skills to express themselves powerfully, the mindset to navigate a complex world, and the imagination to help shape a more vibrant and equitable future.

How Stakeholder Engagement Shaped This Plan

The *CPS Arts Education Plan 2.0* was made possible through the collective will and hard work of the many stakeholders of arts education: parents and students, teachers and principals, CPS Department of Arts Education, Ingenuity, arts partners, and local foundations. Built through a collaborative, citywide effort, the process engaged thousands of stakeholders to ensure that the plan reflects the real needs, challenges, and aspirations of students, educators, families, and community partners.

This collaborative effort was built on the belief that community input is essential to crafting a plan that is not only effective but truly representative of the diverse needs of CPS students and communities. Recognizing that community voice is a critical driver

for equitable investments, the planning process prioritized extensive stakeholder engagement at every stage, including:

- **Principals and School Leaders** – Embedding arts in instructional priorities.
- **Arts Educators** – Delivering high-quality instruction and mentoring students.
- **Community Arts Organizations** – Enhancing learning through partnerships and resources.
- **Higher Education and ISBE** – Strengthening teacher certification pathways.
- **City and State Agencies** – Advocating for arts education funding and policy support.
- **Families and Students** – Driving engagement and advocacy for the arts.

Our Reach

OVERVIEW

2,683

Community members engaged

17

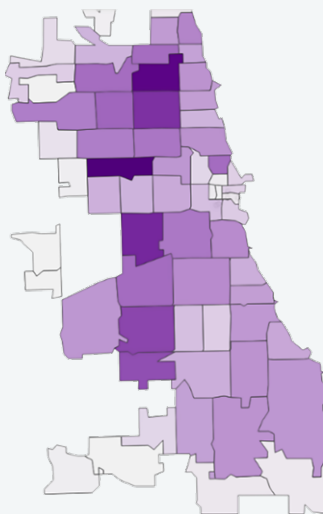
Sessions hosted

364

Schools reached

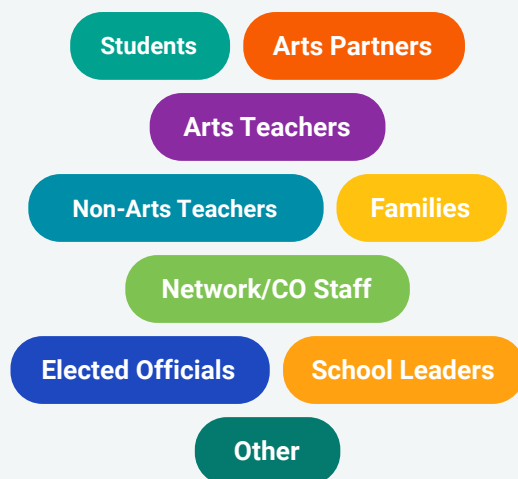
162

Arts organizations engaged



Density of engagement shows higher engagement on the North and West sides.

WHO WE ENGAGED



The Process and Timeline

MAY - JUL

**CONDUCT PLANNING AND BACKGROUND RESEARCH.
BEGIN INTER-AGENCY ADVISORY COUNCIL.**

In May 2024, the Chicago Public Schools Department of Arts Education, in collaboration with Ingenuity and project management support from Civic Consulting Alliance, initiated the planning phase for the *Arts Education Plan 2.0*.

In July 2024, the **Interagency Advisory Council** was established as a vital advisory body, bringing together cross-sector leaders from local government, philanthropy, and cultural institutions. This group has played an essential role

in garnering investment and maintaining open channels of communication with stakeholders throughout the process.

Iteration

AUG - OCT

AUG - DEC

**CONDUCT ENGAGEMENT TO DEFINE RECOMMENDATIONS.
REFINE RECOMMENDATIONS WITH WORKING GROUP.**

Between September and October 2024, CPS hosted seven **public roundtables** across the city and virtually, designed to solicit broad community feedback. These roundtables engaged parents, teachers, students, and community leaders. A group of leaders of Chicago's cultural institutions was also convened throughout the process to support the Plan's development. To ensure that the voices of those most impacted by the plan were heard, CPS also conducted **12 targeted focus groups**. These focus groups allowed for in-depth conversations with key stakeholders, ensuring that the

plan would directly address the needs of those furthest from opportunity.

In an effort to further elevate student voice, CPS launched a comprehensive **student survey** in October 2024, which gathered insights from students in the district. This survey was crucial in understanding the unique perspectives of the student body and ensuring that the plan would meet their educational aspirations and needs.

Building on the community feedback, a 50-person **working group** was formed between October and

December 2024. This group consisted of a cross-section of stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, arts partners, students, and parents, who collaborated to summarize and refine the suggestions from stakeholders. Their work ensured that the plan's recommendations were not only data-driven but also practical and impactful, with a particular focus on those students who face the greatest barriers to access and opportunity.

JAN - MAY

SOCIALIZE AND FINALIZE PLAN

Vision for CPS Students' Experience in the Arts

Every student in Chicago Public Schools will experience innovative, rigorous, and joyful arts learning that cultivates creativity, curiosity, empathy, and confident self-expression. Through bold artistic practice and deep personal exploration, students will become critical thinkers, imaginative problem-solvers, and engaged citizens, ready to thrive in a dynamic world.

Overview of the CPS Arts Education Plan 2.0: Cultivating Creativity

For over a decade, Chicago Public Schools has a comprehensive, data-driven view of arts education across the district. With 99% of all CPS schools submitting arts education data through the 2023-24 Creative Schools Survey, we now hold a clear and detailed picture of where access and quality are thriving—and where schools need targeted support to meet our shared standards. This *Arts Education Plan 2.0: Cultivating Creativity* leverages that clarity to chart a bold course forward, ensuring every CPS student has access to rigorous, inclusive, and transformative arts learning experiences.

This plan builds on the legacy of the 2012 CPS Arts Education Plan and the Creative Schools Certification (CSC), while refining how the district defines and measures “quality”. Until now, many of the indicators categorized under **quality** in the CSC—such as arts expenditures, access to arts partnerships, professional learning, instructional approaches, and use of arts learning standards—have been more accurately reflective of school-level **access** conditions. These inputs are essential, but they tell us whether students can participate in arts education—not what they’re actually learning or how teaching and learning is delivered.

This plan marks a necessary shift: CPS is **establishing a systemwide foundation for defining and measuring the true quality of arts education**—grounded not only in access conditions, but in the heart of instruction itself.

In **Goal 1**: Priority Areas 1.1 through 1.6 continue to address foundational **access** conditions, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to learn in well-resourced, appropriately staffed, and structurally supported environments.

99%

of all 649 CPS schools submitted arts education data through the SY23-24 Creative Schools Survey.



In **Goal 2:** Priority Areas 2.1 through 2.5 establish a new infrastructure for **quality**—focused on what and how students learn, and how the district will support, measure, and evaluate that learning. Quality in arts education will now be defined through five priority areas:



Comprehensive Arts Curriculum that is culturally responsive, standards-aligned, and developmentally appropriate and captures student mastery of the Illinois Arts Learning Standards and artistic processes across disciplines.



Instructional Approaches that reflect best practices and foster creativity, inquiry, and critical thinking in all subject areas.



Professional Learning that equips CPS educators, teaching artists, and arts partners to refine their craft and remain connected to a community of practice.



Arts Partnerships that are aligned to student learning goals and elevate instructional depth.



Strengthening Data Systems to provide insight into arts teaching and learning and learning at scale.

The strategies in this Plan aim to bring schools currently rated as *Strong*, *Developing*, *Emerging*, or with *Incomplete Data* into alignment with CSC's *Excelling* standard by building a deeper understanding of what excellent arts instruction truly looks like.

The strategies are also designed to be flexible, with the expectation that they will adapt and improve as they are implemented. They acknowledge that Chicago's neighborhoods have a distinct history and voice and that no one model or solution will work for all schools. Rather, the goals and recommendations represent a starting point to leverage the resources and opportunities that already exist in the system.

This plan is more than a roadmap—it is a renewed promise of equity—and a reaffirmed belief that every child in Chicago deserves the transformative power of the arts.

In collaboration with and on the behalf of the CPS Department of Arts Education, Ingenuity has collected, measured, and analyzed data on arts education and for the Creative Schools Certification since the SY12-13.

A photograph of students in a band, with a teal color overlay and white line art patterns. The text "GOAL 1" is in a teal box.

GOAL 1

Access to Arts Education

Goal 1: Access to Arts Education

Why is this Important?

Since the adoption of the first CPS Arts Education Plan in 2012, access to arts education has significantly expanded across the district. 96,000 more students now have access to schools rated as Excelling in SY24 compared to SY13. In SY24, 39% of CPS schools met the 2012 Plan's goals and priorities compared to 14% in SY13. This highlights both the progress made and the work still to be done. Certain metrics also have plateaued in recent years, including arts instructional minutes for elementary schools and the breadth and depth of arts instruction available to high school students. With this robust and consistent data tracking, there is a clear understanding of where disparities persist and where newly targeted efforts can drive further impact.

Ideal State:

We envision a district where 100% of CPS students attend schools that meet or exceed our standards for Access, as defined by the Creative Schools Certification (CSC). In this future state, every school is staffed with certified arts educators across multiple disciplines, and all students receive the minimum recommended instructional minutes in the arts. Course offerings are broad, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate from PreK through 12th grade. Schools are equipped with the necessary resources, facilities, and support structures to deliver robust arts programming. Strong partnerships with cultural institutions further enrich students' learning experiences and teacher professional development.

Each Access priority area in this plan directly corresponds to a metric in the CSC Access rubric, including staffing levels, instructional time, course availability and programmatic depth, resources and facilities, and school level conditions to support

arts education. By aligning our strategies with these established benchmarks, we are creating a clear, measurable pathway to ensure that every student has equitable access to high-quality arts education.

96,000

more student have access to schools rated as Excelling in SY23-24 compared to SY12-13.

39%

of CPS schools met the 2012 Plan's goals and priorities in SY23-24 compared to 14% in SY12-13.



Current State Data:

28,000

more students had access to Excelling programs in SY23-24 than in SY19-20.

This is the highest percentage of Excelling schools since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

30%

of schools rated as Excelling in SY19-20.

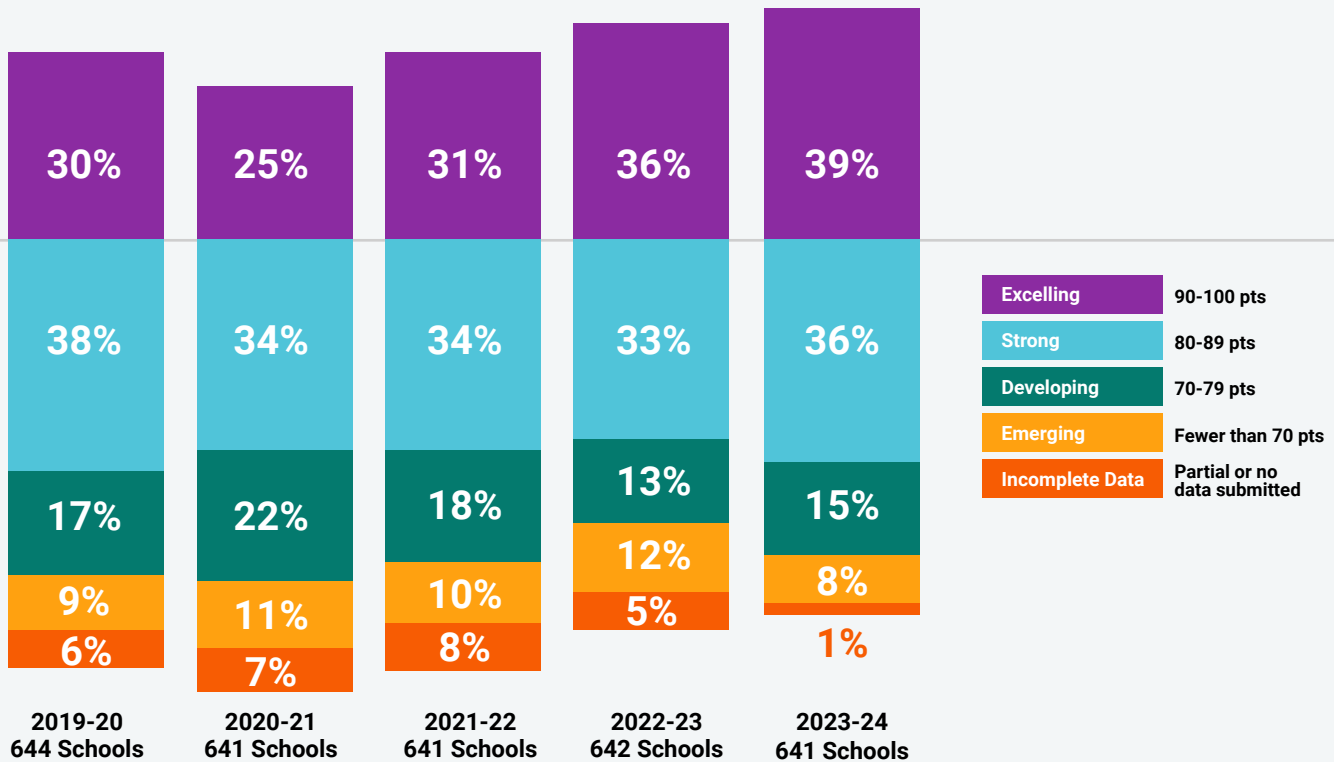
39%

of schools rated as Excelling in SY23-24.

99%

of all 649 CPS schools submitted arts education data through the SY23-24 Creative Schools Survey.

OVERALL CSC RATINGS



The Creative Schools Certification provides a comprehensive quantitative summary of the access of arts education provided by each school in CPS. Excelling schools are those that meet the goals and priorities outlined in the 2012 CPS Arts Education Plan. In SY23-24, 39% of all schools were categorized as Excelling.

Priority Area 1.1 - Staffing

Licensed or endorsed teachers provide long-term, consistent, and sequential arts instruction from year to year that contributes to overall student success. Arts instruction can only be delivered by licensed/endorsed teachers in their specific artistic discipline. Activities delivered by external arts organizations cannot count toward instructional minutes, nor can they give letter grades to students.

The highest percentage of CPS schools met the staffing benchmark in SY23-24 since SY19-20.

For schools to be rated as **Excelling**, schools must have 350 or fewer students per arts instructor.

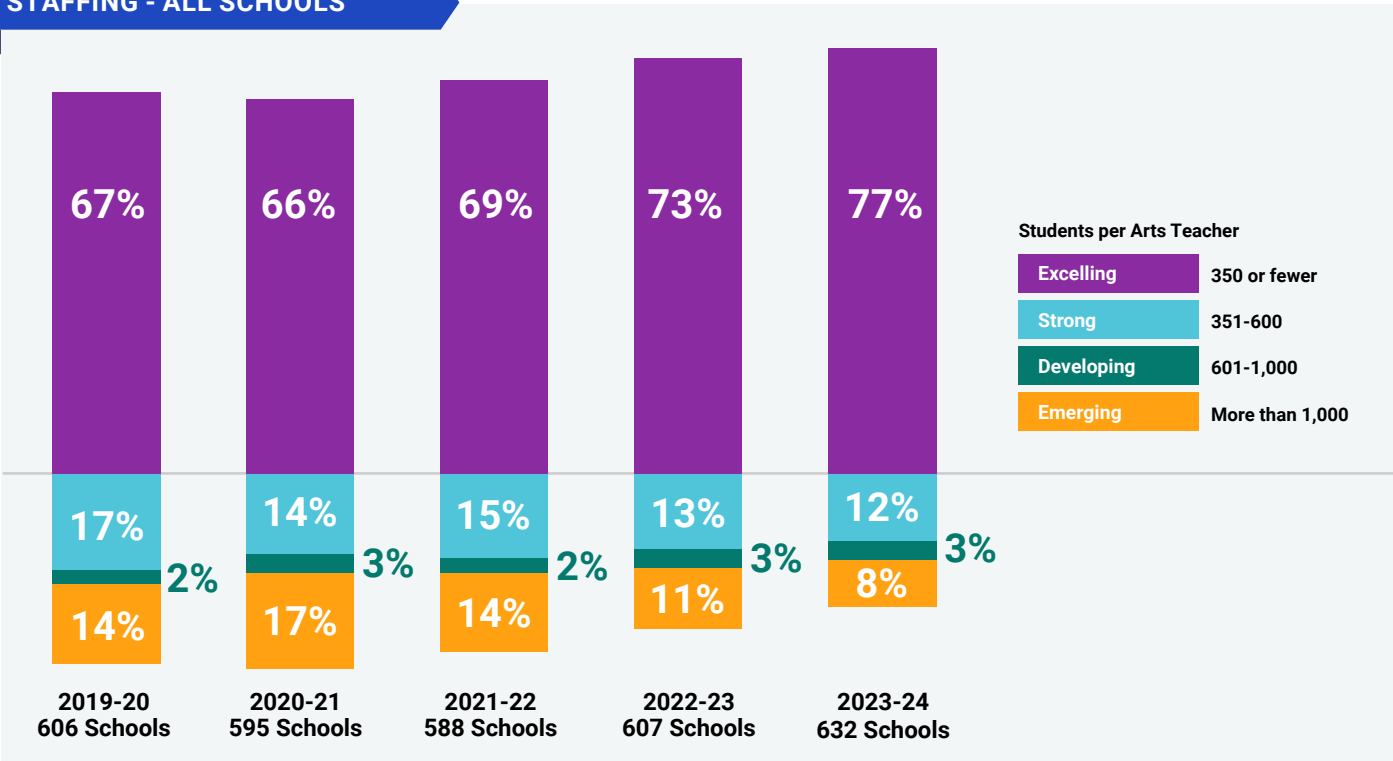
77%

of CPS schools rated **Excelling** on Staffing in SY23-24.

67%

of CPS schools rated as **Excelling** on Staffing in SY19-20.

STAFFING - ALL SCHOOLS



Arts instructors provide access, minutes of instruction, and breadth and depth of instruction that students receive. With all these reasons in mind, arts staffing is a key element of both elementary and high school CSC ratings.

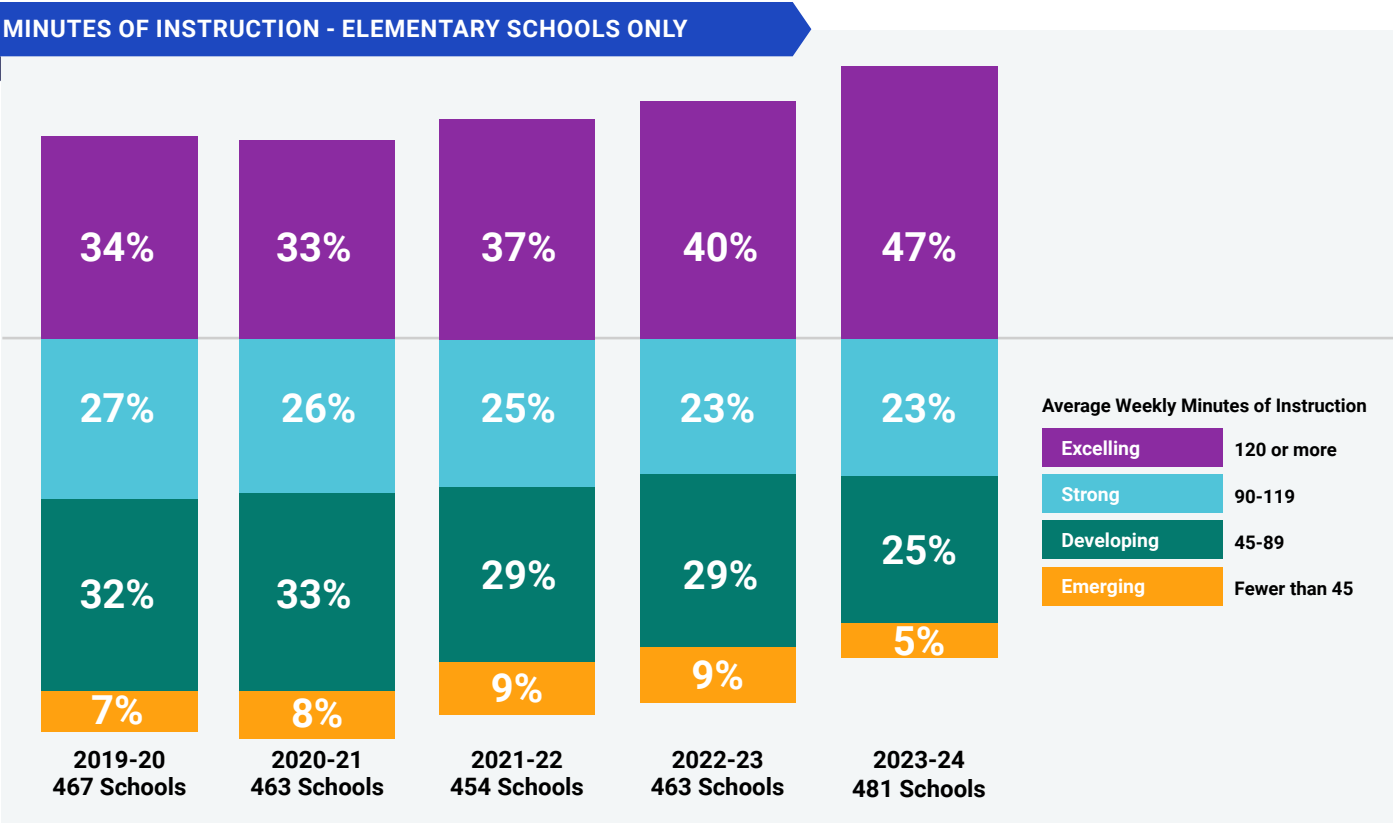
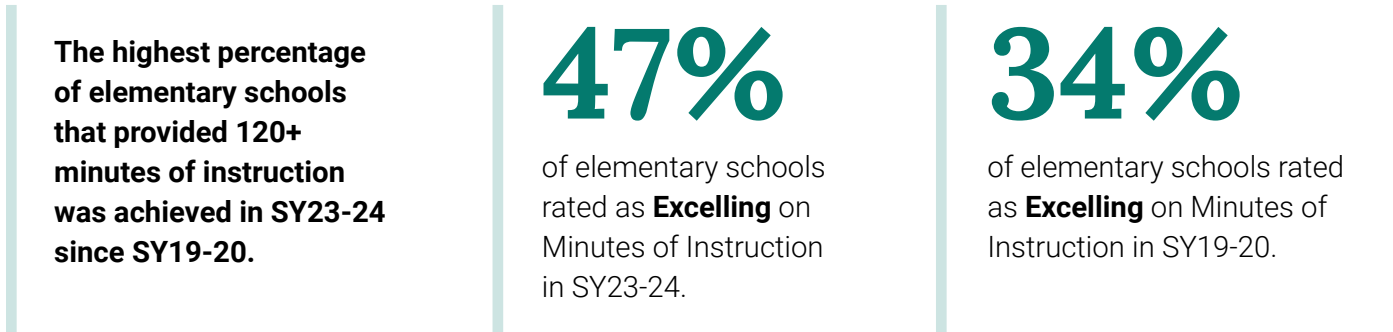
Strategies:

- 1.1.1** Regularly analyze arts staffing data to identify schools without adequate arts educators and provide targeted support through proactive communication, talent referrals, and hiring guidance. This approach will prioritize district-managed schools, where CPS has direct staffing influence, while recognizing that the most significant gaps—particularly at the high school level—exist in non-district-managed schools. Addressing these disparities is critical to ensuring equitable access to arts education citywide, especially for Black students who are disproportionately enrolled in smaller schools.
- 1.1.2** Maintain a real-time internal dashboard of open arts positions, candidate pools, and hiring progress by region.
- 1.1.3** Retain arts teachers by providing mentor and mentee opportunities, continuous professional learning, and avenues for communication and networking through **artlookEducator®**.
- 1.1.4** Provide funding for arts materials, specialized training, and incentives for emerging and veteran teachers, and teachers in schools that have difficulty in hiring or retaining staff, through the Creative Schools Fund.
- 1.1.5** Collaborate with local university programs, to ensure their pre-service teachers are student teaching in CPS, and they have direct communication with the CPS Talent Recruitment team for early offers and job fairs.
- 1.1.6** Maintain and develop certification and credentialing pathways through alternative certification programs, endorsements for current educators, in collaboration with higher education institutions, arts partners, and other CPS offices.

artlookEducator® is a platform designed for arts educators within the Chicago Public Schools to facilitate collaboration, resource sharing, and professional development. It allows educators to connect with peers, and share resources to enhance their arts education practices.

Priority Area 1.2 - Minutes of Arts Instruction: Elementary Schools

More instructional minutes mean more opportunities to explore new disciplines, expand students’ abilities to creatively engage, and form connections across content areas. To be rated as Excelling on this measure, elementary schools must offer at least 120 minutes weekly on average of arts instruction throughout the school year.



Elementary schools have made progress with providing two hours of arts instruction weekly to students, though it still remains the Access metric elementary schools struggle most with. While staffing is at the core of providing high-quality arts programming, there are still other barriers, such as scheduling, to ensuring all students have access to two hours of arts instruction per week.

Strategies:

- 1.2.1** Create a scheduling toolkit and repository of elementary school master schedules and exemplars, that can be shared with school administrators and Arts Liaisons, allowing the sharing of best practices in scheduling.
- 1.2.2** Design and implement support grants through the Creative Schools Fund to assist schools in meeting the district's 120-minute weekly arts instruction benchmark. Grant eligibility and award tiers will be informed by the Opportunity Index to ensure that resources are directed toward schools with the greatest need.

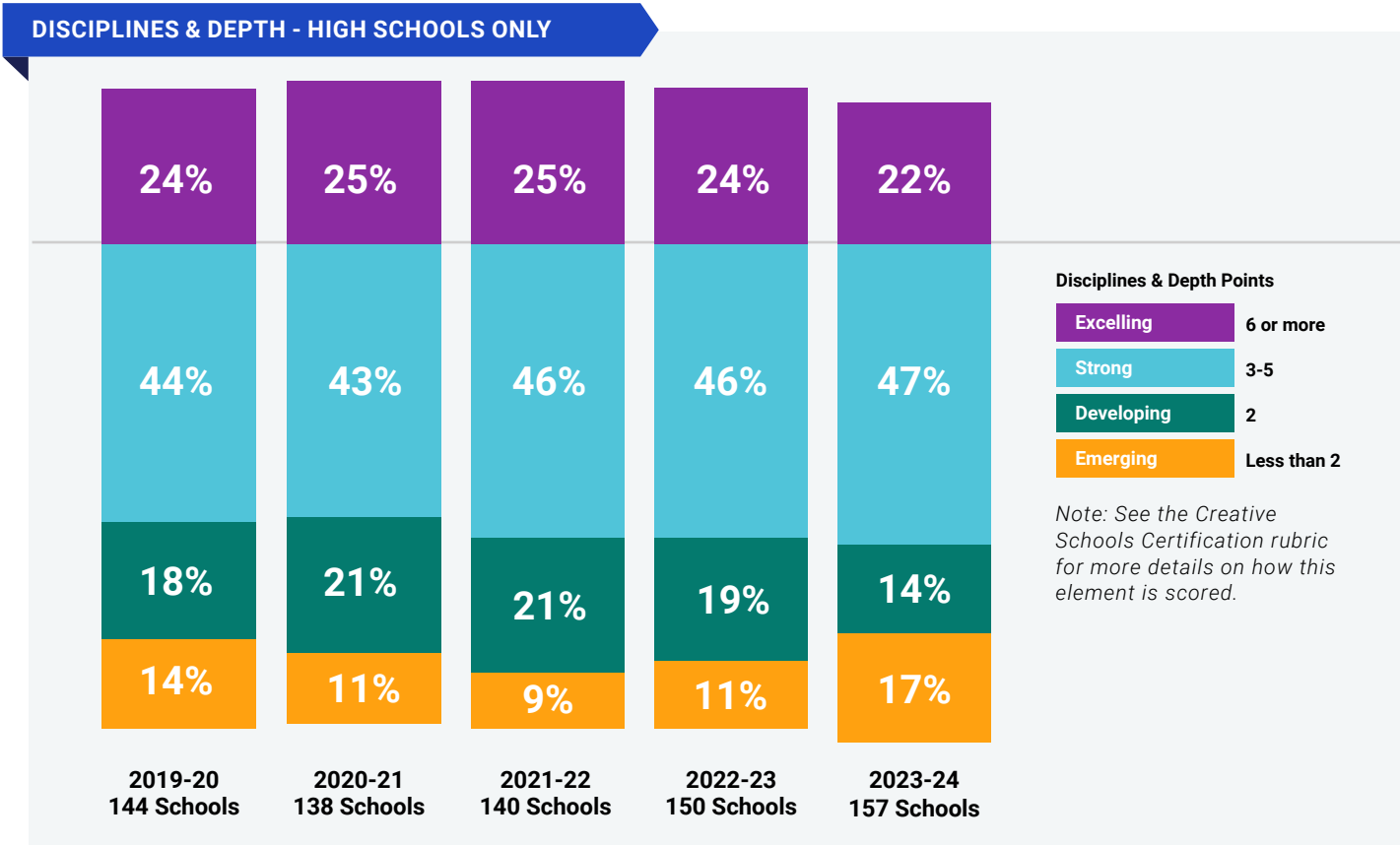


Priority Area 1.3 - Arts Courses, Disciplines & Depth: High School

For high schools, Disciplines & Depth — the number of disciplines offered and the depth of coursework available — remain a key metric for the high school student arts experience. Currently, high schools generally must offer at least three artistic disciplines (visual arts, music, theatre, dance, literary arts, or media arts), and multiple years of coursework in each, to be rated as Excelling. This has been a very challenging benchmark for the vast majority of high schools to achieve.

22%

of high schools rated as **Excelling** on Disciplines & Depth in SY23-24.



High schools continue to face challenges in offering both a breadth of artistic disciplines and depth of coursework. School size is one of the biggest factors regarding whether a student has access to at least three artistic disciplines. There are a number of reasons why schools with a larger student population are more likely to offer a breadth of disciplines, such as the per-pupil budgeting model within the District (recently shifted to a school based model in SY25). With offering a wider variety of disciplines, schools may also need additional dedicated art spaces, such as for dance or theatre programs. While many high schools met the benchmark for staffing, there is still room for growth on the Disciplines & Depth measure.

Strategies:

1.3.1

In collaboration with high school leaders and teachers, update the current Creative Schools Certification metric on Disciplines & Depth to better align to course breadth and depth requirements for high school graduation.

1.3.2

Analyze district trends, and provide customized reports to encourage high schools to expand the types of courses offered to students. This includes specific recommendations and examples from other similar schools, in order to increase the types of available courses.

1.3.3

Expand access to advanced arts learning opportunities to increase AP and dual-credit arts courses, investigate alternative credit pathways such as waivers and exemptions to increase arts course feasibility, and review the CPS Graduation Policy arts requirements.

Priority Area 1.4 - School-level Conditions to Support Arts Education

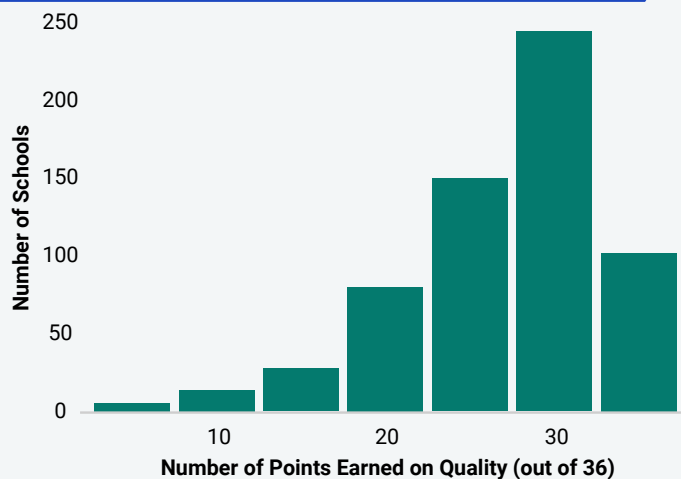
These elements measure how a school creates and sustains the conditions needed to bring rich arts learning opportunities to its students that go beyond access to arts teachers and courses.

School-level conditions include measures of:

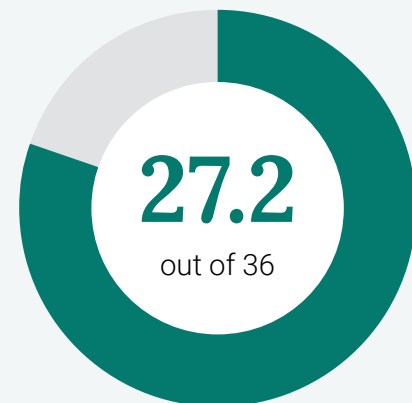
- **Arts learning standards alignment**
- **Representation of the arts in individual school governance structures (e.g.: ILT, LSC, CIWP)**
- **Arts expenditures for supplies, materials, and programming**
- **Partnerships with external arts organizations and teaching artists**
- **Participation in arts-specific professional development**
- **Opportunities for family and community engagement**
- **A thoughtful and planned approach to instruction in the arts**

These elements have historically been measured within the Creative Schools Certification under the **Quality** section, however, these metrics don't specifically measure the quality of arts learning in classrooms. Many of the above metrics were added or expanded upon within the second iteration of the Creative Schools Certification, which was implemented starting the 2019-20 school year. These school-level conditions remain important to measure how schools create and sustain conditions, though the section may be renamed and adjusted to better align to their use.

DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOLS BY POINTS EARNED ON QUALITY METRICS IN SY23-24



AVERAGE POINTS EARNED ON QUALITY METRICS IN SY23-24



Strategies:

1.4.1

Evolve the Creative Schools Roadmaps, an annual customized report of the arts education conditions schools do and do not meet, and support for how to meet the standard. This is currently part of the annual Creative Schools Certification process.

1.4.2

Develop and publish guides for multiple instructional approaches that can be utilized in arts education. These guides provide school leaders with clear definitions, exemplary resources, research, scheduling and professional learning implications, budget considerations, and look-fors to implement and support each approach.

1.4.3

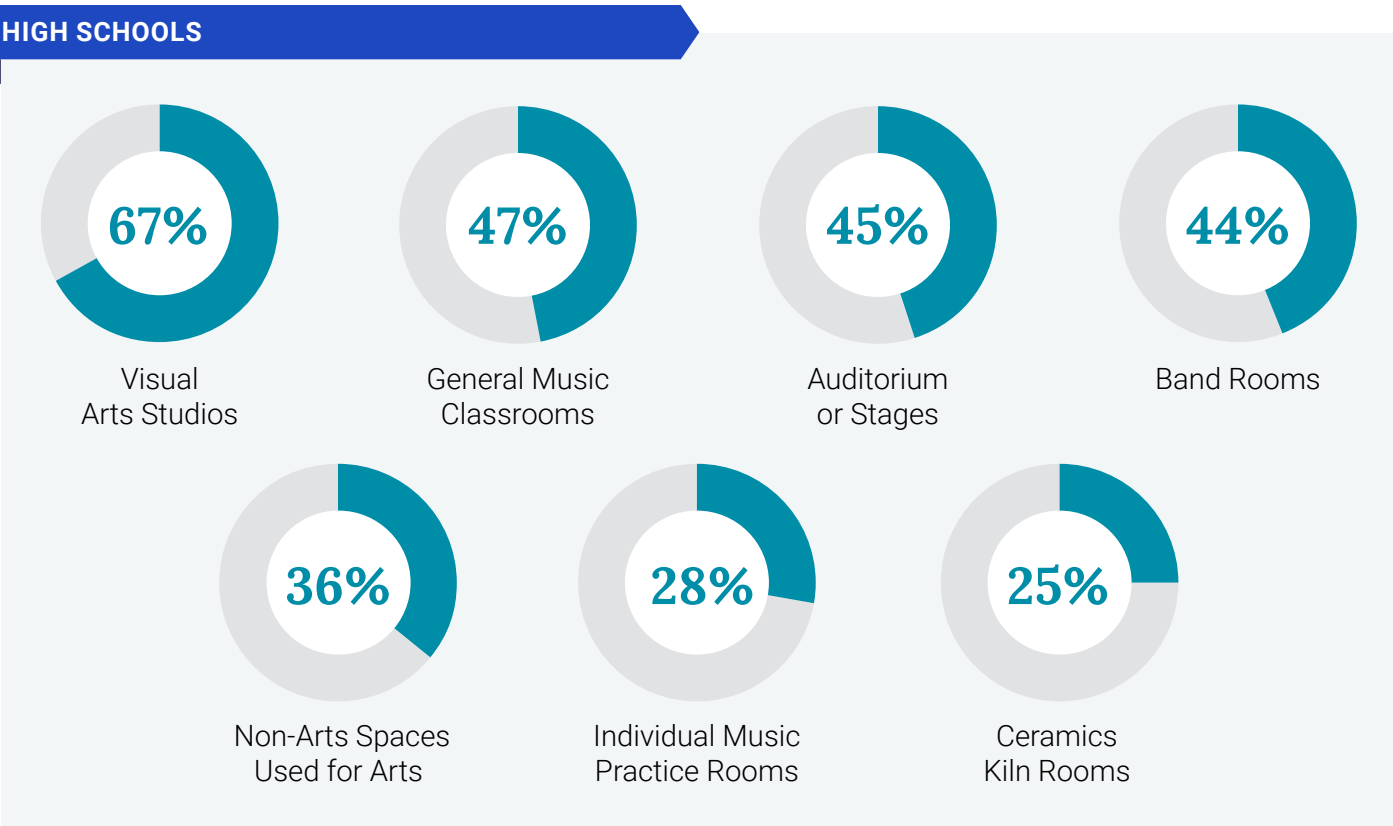
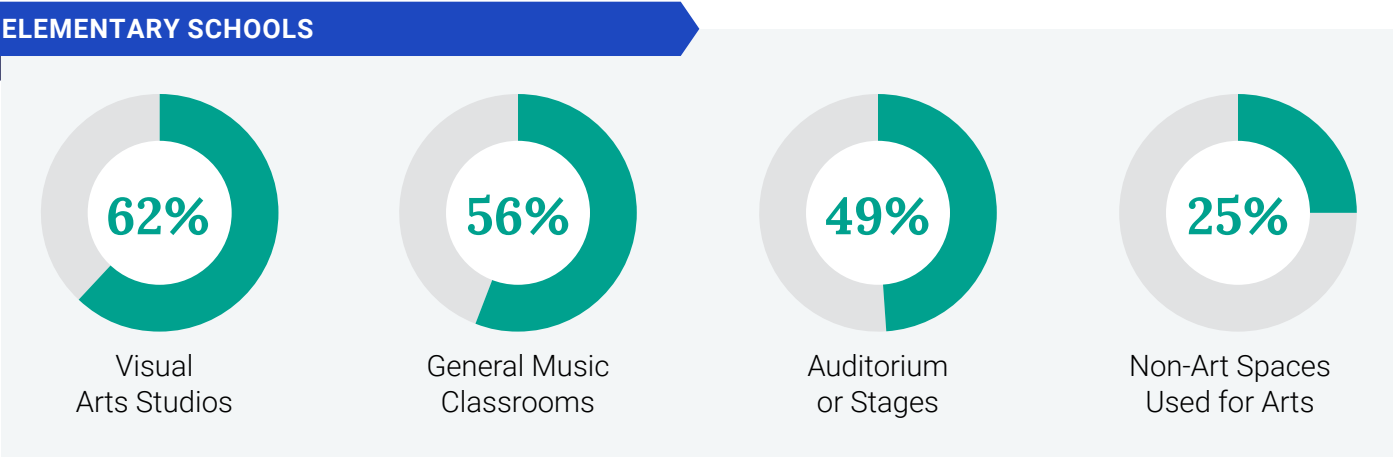
Revise the Arts Partnership metric within the Creative Schools Certification to better assess the reach, quality, and impact of partnership programming.



Priority Area 1.5 - Resources and Dedicated Spaces

Access to supplies, equipment, and facilities to experience authentic arts learning is vital for high quality arts learning. A better understanding of resources and spaces will help direct supports to those schools in greatest need.

According to the 2023-24 Creative Schools Survey, Arts Liaisons reported the following facilities in their school:



Only dedicated arts spaces that were reported by at least 25% of schools are shown above.

Strategies:

1.5.1

Establish strategic partnerships with national and local organizations and philanthropic partners to secure instruments, classroom materials, and essential arts supplies for CPS educators and students. Leverage public-private collaborations, donation programs, grants, and corporate sponsorships to expand resource access.

1.5.2

Perform a district-wide arts facilities and learning space audit to understand which schools have access to high-quality, well-equipped arts environments. Create recommendations to prioritize schools with limited arts infrastructure, align facility improvements with district capital planning, and establish funding mechanisms to support equitable upgrades in arts classrooms, performance spaces, and creative learning environments.

1.5.3

Provide greater access to resources by offering memberships to national or local arts organizations that provide immediate access to high-quality supplemental curricular resources, professional development, and communities of practice.

Priority Area 1.6 - Strengthening Data Systems: Access

Good data leads to smarter decisions and more access to quality arts for all students. Continued data collection through the Creative Schools Certification is essential for both schools and arts partners. Arts Liaisons require improved support, and better data is needed by arts partners in order to report on arts.

Strategies:

- 1.6.1** Continue support to Arts Liaisons to collect data, organize resources, and identify opportunities to increase arts education in their school.
- 1.6.2** Incentivize arts partners to regularly update their data in **artlook**® by linking data submission to visibility within tools like the Creative Schools Fund, the *Arts Partner Standards of Practice* designation, or the CPS RFQ processes.
- 1.6.3** Expand the data collected from partners to include metrics such as number of students served, grade levels, program types, school sites, and program outcomes—while minimizing administrative burden.
- 1.6.4** Expand Arts Partner Reports on **artlook**® to include a roadmap for organization-level offerings, reach, programs, and support for pursuing quality through the lens of the *Arts Partner Standards of Practice*.

artlook® is a public, interactive online platform designed to connect schools, arts organizations, and funders to increase access to quality arts programs. It serves as a tool for mapping and tracking arts education across in Chicago, helping to connect resources and promote equitable access to the arts.



A photograph of two young men smiling. The man on the left is wearing a black polo shirt with a gold police badge on the chest and is holding a blue and black electric guitar. The man on the right is wearing a grey hoodie with a Kirby character on it. The background is a school hallway. The image has a purple tint and white wavy lines on the left side.

GOAL 2

High Quality Arts Education

Goal 2: High Quality Arts Education

Why is this Important?

While access to arts education has expanded significantly since the 2012 Plan, quality remains difficult to measure across schools and grade levels. Instructional minutes, staffing, and courses offered provide a snapshot of opportunity, but they do not guarantee that students are engaging in relevant, rigorous, and responsive learning that reflects best practices in teaching and learning.

Without a clear and shared definition of high-quality arts education—and systems to measure and support it—there is no assurance that CPS students are receiving the kinds of deep, meaningful, and transformative artistic experiences that empower them as creative and confident learners. School leaders require models and systems for supporting high quality instruction in the arts so that educators have the resources necessary to deeply engage and inspire students through the arts.

Ideal State:





In every CPS school, high-quality arts education is a core component of student learning—driven by developmentally appropriate, standards-aligned instruction and supported by strong leadership, a collaborative school culture, and sustained

community partnerships. It is not solely the responsibility of arts educators, but a shared commitment across the district, where school leaders, general educators, families, and arts partners work together to ensure that the arts are integral to every child's educational experience.

To realize the vision articulated in the Portrait of a CPS Arts Graduate, CPS will support a developmentally aligned instructional approach that delivers coherent, high-quality arts learning from PreK through 12th grade. This approach honors the natural progression of students' artistic, cognitive, and social-emotional development, while remaining responsive to school-level choice, staffing structures, and community contexts.



CPS is offering schools clear guidance on how arts education can be delivered by arts teachers across different developmental stages. Recognizing that both arts integration and discipline-specific instruction are essential at all grade levels, the district will support schools in implementing a flexible instructional approach organized around four developmental phases:

GRADE BAND	INSTRUCTIONAL	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
1 PREK-2	 Creative Exploration	<p>Students engage in imaginative play, sensory exploration, and expressive risk-taking. Learning is multimodal, joyful, and focused on curiosity and foundational self-expression through movement, sound, and visual storytelling.</p>
2 GRADES 3-5	 Arts Integration	<p>Students explore multiple art forms while making cross-curricular connections through integrated, project-based learning. Instruction is collaborative and reflective, building artistic vocabulary and reinforcing learning across subjects.</p>
3 GRADES 6-8	 Exploratory Choice	<p>Students choose artistic disciplines for focused study and begin developing technique, critique, and creative identity. Learning is culturally responsive, student-led, and includes portfolio work and early performance opportunities.</p>
4 GRADES 9-12	 Artistic Pathways	<p>Students pursue advanced, sequential coursework in a chosen discipline or interdisciplinary path. Instruction is standards-aligned, career-connected, and includes real-world opportunities like exhibitions, internships, and senior capstone projects.</p>

This model does not prescribe a single method of delivery. Instead, it provides a unifying vision that allows schools to structure their instructional practices in ways that reflect these developmental goals. This approach is about creating clarity, coherence, and opportunity—ensuring that every CPS student, regardless of school type or neighborhood, experiences a meaningful and developmentally rich journey in the arts.

Rigorous and responsive instruction in arts education requires a deep understanding of both the artistic process and the diverse needs of learners. Lessons emphasize process over product, promote inquiry and choice, and cultivate artistic growth, self-expression, and reflective practice. Educators create inclusive, responsive learning environments that incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy, interdisciplinary connections, and differentiated strategies—making the arts personally meaningful and academically rigorous.

Arts educators are expert teachers and practicing artists. They are supported at CPS through access to high-quality curriculum, interdisciplinary instructional resources, and collaborative professional learning communities. As integral members of the school community, they contribute to school improvement planning and build authentic relationships with families and neighborhoods—often teaching entire student populations and multiple members of the same household.

School and district leaders understand the characteristics of high-quality arts education and are equipped to recognize, support, and champion it. Arts organizations serve as strategic partners—accountable to school needs and student

outcomes—offering supplemental programming that aligns with district priorities and complements classroom instruction.

In this ideal state, high-quality arts education is not isolated to individual classrooms or select schools—it is a districtwide standard of excellence, guided by shared expectations, supported by robust systems, and sustained by a vibrant ecosystem of educators, partners, and families dedicated to nurturing student creativity, learning, and well-being.

High quality teaching and learning in the arts requires:

- Rigorous and culturally-responsive curricula, with authentic assessments.
- Developmentally-aligned instructional approaches to provide a diversity of learning modalities.
- Ongoing and job-embedded professional learning for arts and non-arts educators.
- Authentic, real-world student experiences that leverage the assets across the Chicago arts education sector.
- Regular analysis of practice data and research to inform future training and resource development.

Current State Data:

Curriculum is often misunderstood as simply a series of learning activities, when a truly comprehensive and rigorous curriculum includes all of the educator and student materials, flexible content, and embedded assessments. The market of available arts curricula contains varying levels of quality, accessibility, and cost, leading many educators to develop their own materials or piece together from multiple, disconnected sources. As a result, quality can vary widely based on individual educator capacity, school and organizational leadership priorities, and available funding.

CPS has numerous frameworks and priorities that describe certain aspects of a high quality student experience, but those resources are not well-publicized, organized, or attending to arts education.

While a definition of arts partner quality has been established through the *Arts Partner Standards of Practice*, there is currently no system that measures, understands, or directly supports arts educators' instructional practice at the classroom or program level.

With the many disparate ways quality is tracked within CPS, there is no unified system to measure the effectiveness of teaching in arts education. A new system will need to be created that includes existing classroom conditions data and arts indicators of educator and student mastery.

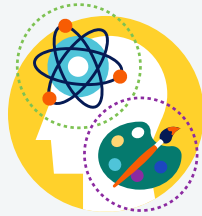


Priority Area 2.1 - Comprehensive Arts Curriculum

High quality curriculum is a cornerstone of quality student learning. Educators must have access to comprehensive curricula in their artistic discipline that is rigorous, standards-based, and provide multiple content and process pathways for students to choose what and how they learn. Curricular materials must be anchored in developmentally appropriate instructional approaches, allowing students to progress through four developmental stages:



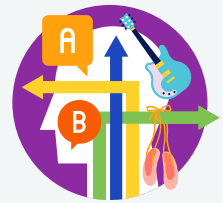
Creative Exploration
(PreK-2)



Arts Integration
(3-5)



Exploratory Choice
(6-8)

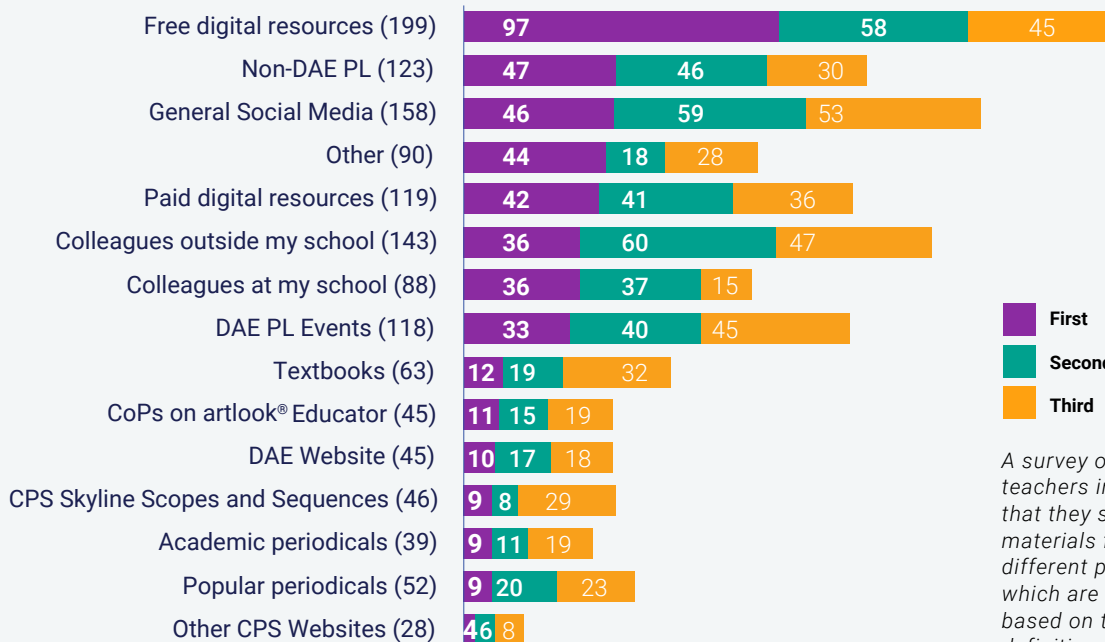


Artistic Pathways
(9-12)

Comprehensive curricula include teacher- and student-facing resources, course, unit, and lesson materials, and embedded assessments, all developed simultaneously and derived from arts learning standards. Comprehensive curricula provide educators and students with everything they need for the entire year, but also guides educators to create custom experiences for the students they are working with.

Curricular Sources

CLASSROOM PRACTICE SOURCES, ALL RESPONDENTS



A survey of over 400 arts teachers in 2024 showed that they source curricular materials from many different places, most of which are not evaluated based on the district's definition of high quality.

Strategies:

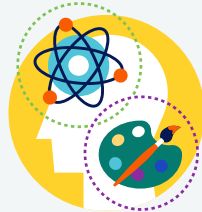
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- 2.1.1** Develop and implement a comprehensive, standards-aligned, and culturally responsive PreK-12 arts curriculum. This district wide curriculum will be anchored in four developmentally appropriate instructional approaches—PreK-2 Creative Exploration, 3-5 Arts Integration, 6-8 Exploratory Choice, and 9-12 Artistic Pathways—and will include vertically aligned learning progressions, high-quality core units, and assessment tools.
-
- 2.1.2** Integrate curated supplemental materials from Chicago’s rich ecosystem of arts organizations, providing educators with diverse, flexible, and locally relevant resources to support high-quality implementation across all school models and instructional contexts.
-
- 2.1.3** Develop a system to track the arts curricula being implemented in schools, and if those curricula meet the definition of high-quality, in order to provide targeted supports and professional learning to applicable groups. This is called for in the district’s Continuous Improvement and Data Transparency (CIDT) policy.

Priority Area 2.2 - Instructional Approaches

Recognizing that arts integration and discipline-specific instruction are both essential and will continue to exist at all grade levels, the district will guide schools toward a flexible instructional framework built around four developmental phases:



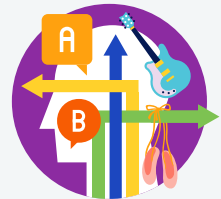
Creative Exploration
(PreK-2)



Arts Integration
(3-5)



Exploratory Choice
(6-8)



Artistic Pathways
(9-12)

This shift to a developmentally aligned instructional approach represents a critical evolution in how CPS structures arts education across the district. For too long, access to high-quality arts instruction has varied widely by grade band, school type, and neighborhood—resulting in differing student experiences and inconsistent opportunities for deeper learning. By aligning instructional expectations to students’ developmental stages, while preserving flexibility in delivery, CPS can address long-standing inequities and ensure that every student progresses through a coherent, meaningful arts education continuum. This model also provides a common language and structure that supports stronger curriculum design, more targeted professional learning, and clearer communication with families and communities.

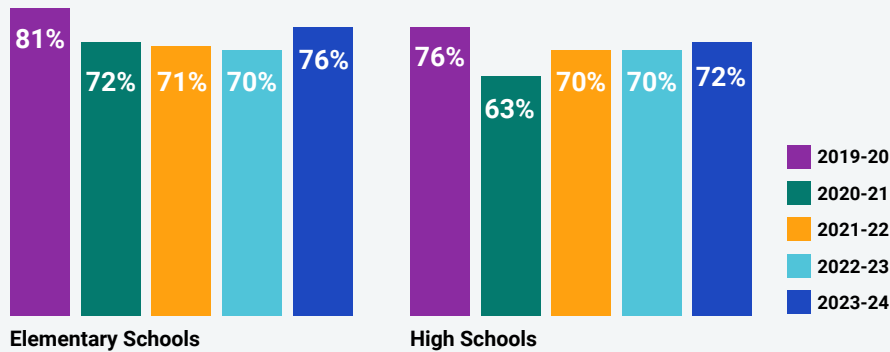
Strategies:

- 2.2.1** Develop supports and expectations that help schools align their arts instruction to this framework, while allowing for variations in staffing, scheduling, and resources. Outline best practices for instruction, organize exemplar resources, and provide a framework to guide school leaders, teachers, and partners in implementation.
- 2.2.2** Form a city-wide task force of educators, teaching artists, program designers and evaluators to document and catalogue best practice examples of arts experiences rooted in each of the four developmental phases. Develop integrated curriculum frameworks, planning guides, assessment tools, and professional development syllabi.
- 2.2.3** Identify, highlight, and learn from exemplary school practices, starting with Fine & Performing Arts schools, in order to scale these approaches across the district.
- 2.2.4** Scale up high-quality professional development targeted to non-arts educators, with a focus on arts integration. After participating in a specific professional learning sequence, which may include collaboration with a teaching artist in their classroom, educators will earn a certificate in arts integration, enabling them to serve as arts integration leaders in their schools.

Priority Area 2.3 - Professional Learning

Ongoing professional learning (PL) is crucial for arts educators and should be grounded in best practices and the Illinois Arts Learning Standards. Professional learning will be experiential, rooted in research-based instructional approaches, and aligned to CPS curricular materials where available. This includes practices that support a growth mindset, challenge implicit bias, and elevate asset-based and culturally responsive pedagogies. It should be accessible to all stakeholders. Professional learning providers will facilitate learning and resources to the many diverse stakeholders across the arts education sector.

ARTS-SPECIFIC PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



76% + 72%

elementary
schools

high
schools

In SY23-24, 76% of elementary schools and 72% of high schools reported that arts instructors or administrators participated in arts-specific professional learning.

According to the Annual Arts Teacher Survey - Teachers who engaged with district PL and/or resources reported significantly higher levels of understanding and implementation of the Illinois Arts Learning Standards, compared to teachers who did not engage with those supports.

63 + 62%

Over half of all respondents found PL, and accompanying resources “helpful” in their understanding (63%) and implementation (62%) of the Illinois Arts Learning Standards.

Strategies:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 2.3.1 | Conduct an annual review of existing professional learning offerings to identify gaps, ensure coherence across partner- and district-led offerings, and align all learning experiences to the instructional vision of the Arts Education Plan. |
| 2.3.2 | Enhance accessibility of professional learning by expanding flexible training formats for arts educators, general education teachers and school leaders, including live, asynchronous, and on-demand learning opportunities, integrating digital platforms to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing. |
| 2.3.3 | Create a centralized, searchable, online hub for readily available asynchronous professional learning for CPS arts educators. |
| 2.3.4 | Coordinate and disseminate centralized professional learning opportunities available to all arts educators and art partners in order to ensure stakeholders understand what exists and how to access the multitude of opportunities across Chicago. |
| 2.3.5 | Continue to develop cohorts of Arts Teacher Leaders to lead peer professional learning opportunities for arts educators across the sector. |
| 2.3.6 | Update the Arts Addendum to the Framework for Teaching to support arts teachers and school administrators to authentically evaluate teacher practices aligned to current best practices. |
| 2.3.7 | Coordinate with key partners on events for multiple audiences for the purposes of professional learning, collaboration, and celebration of arts education. |
| 2.3.8 | Leverage schools' Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) to deliver school-based professional learning based on district best practices and expectations. |
| 2.3.9 | Schools with a Fine & Performing Arts School board-designation will receive specialized coaching, professional learning, and resources to guide administrators and staff to meet the standards for success for those programs. |
| 2.3.10 | Develop specific professional learning for teaching artists and arts partners to develop high-quality curriculum, instruction, and assessments, aligned with district best practices and priorities. |

Priority Area 2.4 - Arts Partnerships

Arts partnership programs should align with the district's quality standards. Infrastructure support is needed to make it easier for schools to engage high-quality partners and for partners to navigate CPS systems. Strategies include developing a designation system, advocating to reduce administrative barriers, improving data systems, and incentivizing high-quality partnerships.

Strategies:

-
- 2.4.1** Building from the *Arts Partner Standards of Practice*, design and implement an arts partner designation system to support, improve, incentivize, and recognize organizations and teaching artists pursuing high quality student experiences. It will be essential to engage arts partners and teaching artists in the development of the designation system to ensure it reflects the diverse needs, capacities, and structures of organizations of all sizes and types.
-
- 2.4.2** Highlight organizations and teaching artists that engage with the *Arts Partner Standards of Practice* designation as high-quality partners within the Creative Schools Fund, making it easier for schools to identify and select them, while still allowing schools the flexibility to partner with other partners.
-
- 2.4.3** Encourage arts partner organizations to participate in the *Arts Partner Standards of Practice* designation process by issuing a CPS Request for Qualifications (RFQ) that gives higher ratings to organizations that complete the designation.
-
- 2.4.4** Establish regular virtual or in-person support hours for arts partners to receive direct assistance with navigating CPS systems, such as procurement, vendor onboarding, and safety and security protocols.
-
- 2.4.5** Develop an Arts Partner Readiness Guide to help arts organizations proactively complete key CPS requirements and streamline the school partnership process. The guide should include clear, step-by-step instructions for vendor registration, fingerprinting, background checks, timelines, support contacts, and FAQs.
-
- 2.4.6** Advocate for process improvements across relevant CPS departments (e.g., Procurement, Safety and Security, Vendor Management) to reduce administrative barriers for arts partners and expand equitable access to school-based opportunities.
-
- 2.4.7** Develop and implement a district-wide Arts Partnership Framework to strengthen alignment between schools and community arts organizations. This framework will define clear partnership roles, program types, goals, and responsibilities, ensuring all collaborations reflect CPS priorities and meet high-quality arts education standards. It will incorporate a set of best practices designed to foster dynamic, equitable collaborations among schools, arts partners, and communities—enhancing student access to the arts and deepening learning outcomes across disciplines.

Priority Area 2.5 - Strengthening Data Systems: Quality

The district seeks to define what quality arts education looks like and improve tools for measuring it. This includes analyzing existing evaluation systems and developing new, arts-specific tools. Annual reports will help guide continuous improvement for schools and educators. CPS will develop systems to measure quality in arts education. This could mirror a similar system to the Creative Schools Certification that currently measures Access.

Strategies:

- 2.5.1** Analyze the purpose and utility of current district classroom conditions tools (Cultivate and Elevate surveys, 5Essentials Survey, teacher evaluations, Framework for Teaching, Rigor Walks, and other protocols) to determine what is currently being measured in arts classrooms. Develop complementary resources for each of the districtwide classroom evaluation systems, aligned with arts education best practices, for more authentic applications in arts classrooms.
- 2.5.2** Develop new systems that supplement existing tools in order to holistically analyze school- and district-wide arts education trends in the quality of classroom, educator, and student work.
- 2.5.3** Create and publish annual analyses that describe the landscape of quality practices. Use those analyses to identify key practice shifts based on that data. Consult with schools and other departments on ways to improve targeted areas of growth, and develop professional learning according to those findings.
- 2.5.4** Create a proposal and seek funding for a research study on the impact of arts education access and quality on the students in Chicago Public Schools. Targeted research should focus on the impact of the developmentally-aligned instructional approaches of Creative Exploration (PreK-2), Arts Integration (3-5), Exploratory Choice (6-8), Artistic Pathways (9-12).





Appendix

CPS Department of Arts Education

The CPS Department of Arts Education, within the Office of Teaching & Learning, ensures that every Chicago Public Schools student receives a high-quality arts education by creating conditions at the classroom, school, district, and state level that allow the arts to grow and flourish. This coordination has proven crucial for the expansion of school and teacher support, student arts opportunities, annual evaluation of gaps in arts education, and targeted interventions for a more equitable distribution of resources. Primary responsibilities of the Department of Arts Education include:



Facilitating professional learning for arts teachers and schools



Providing city-wide arts programming for students, especially those lacking access to arts education



Guiding schools toward increased arts programming, especially those with a Fine & Performing Arts School designation



Collecting and analyzing arts education data to inform policies and recommendations



Supporting external arts organizations working in CPS schools



Leveraging district data and other key metrics, such as the Creative Schools Certification, to create more equitable resource distribution and granting models

Case Study in Arts Integration: Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE)

CPS is poised to embrace arts integration as a foundational strategy to address the complex needs of its students and schools. Arts Integration is a transdisciplinary methodology wherein arts practice is a means for rigorous investigation, representation, expression, and reflection across curricular content. According to the 2023-24 State of the Arts report, 61% of elementary schools and 45% of high schools report utilizing arts integration as an instructional approach. By developing a district-wide commitment to arts integration, including procedures, resources, and metrics, CPS can leverage its benefits into more classrooms to drive student growth. A key partner in this work is Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE), whose research-based arts integration model is present in 42 CPS schools.

61%

of elementary schools

+

45%

of high schools reported utilizing arts integration as an instructional approach in SY23-24 within the Creative Schools Survey.

Evidence of Impact

Research on the impact of arts integration programs in Chicago Public Schools indicates that low- performing students do better when they participate in consistent programs integrating the arts with academic subjects. In addition, schools that integrate the arts into their curriculum outperform other schools.

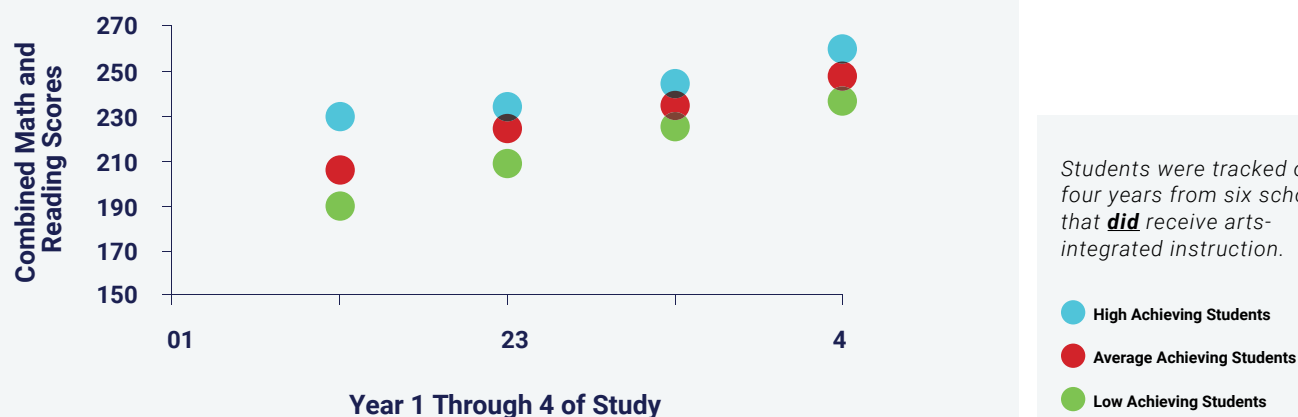
Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE), in collaboration with Chicago Public Schools, completed a four-year project, the Partnership for Arts Integration Research (PAIR), that brought teaching artists together with 4th, 5th, and 6th-grade classroom teachers at six schools to measure impact on student academic performance. During those four years, the group gathered multiple sources of research data to examine changes

in student achievement and the development of teachers and schools engaged in arts-integrated instruction. The project was supported by a US Department of Education Arts Education Model Development & Dissemination grant.

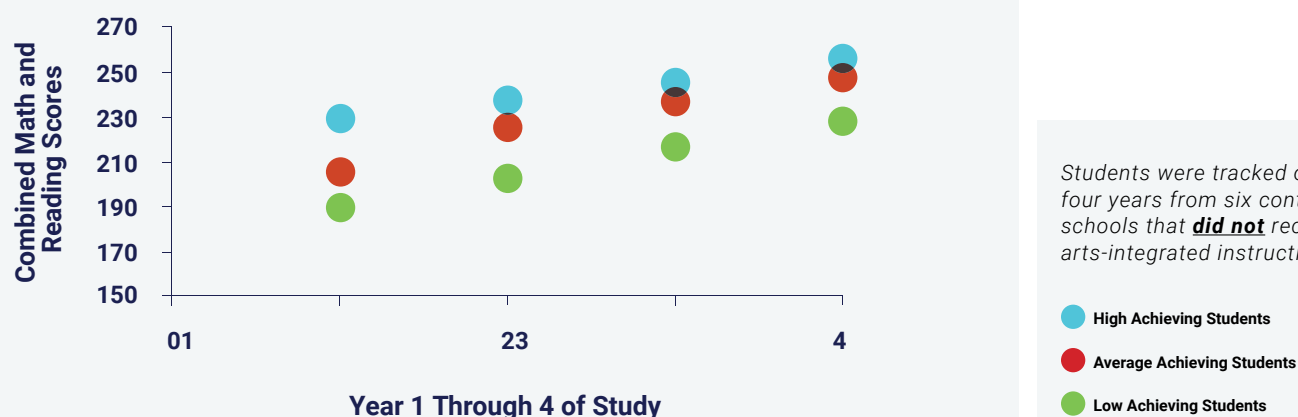
Results from these and other CAPE studies clearly indicate that the arts significantly impact student achievement. Researchers looked at students' standardized test scores in addition to a range of classroom work and interviews with teachers. When combined, this data provides a compelling portrait of student learning. The study shows that the arts are a promising method for improving levels of student engagement in learning and that the arts may hold the key for overall school improvement.

1. Low-achieving students increase academic achievement when participating consistently in arts-integrated programs

SCHOOLS WITH ARTS INTEGRATED INSTRUCTION: WHAT HAPPENS TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?



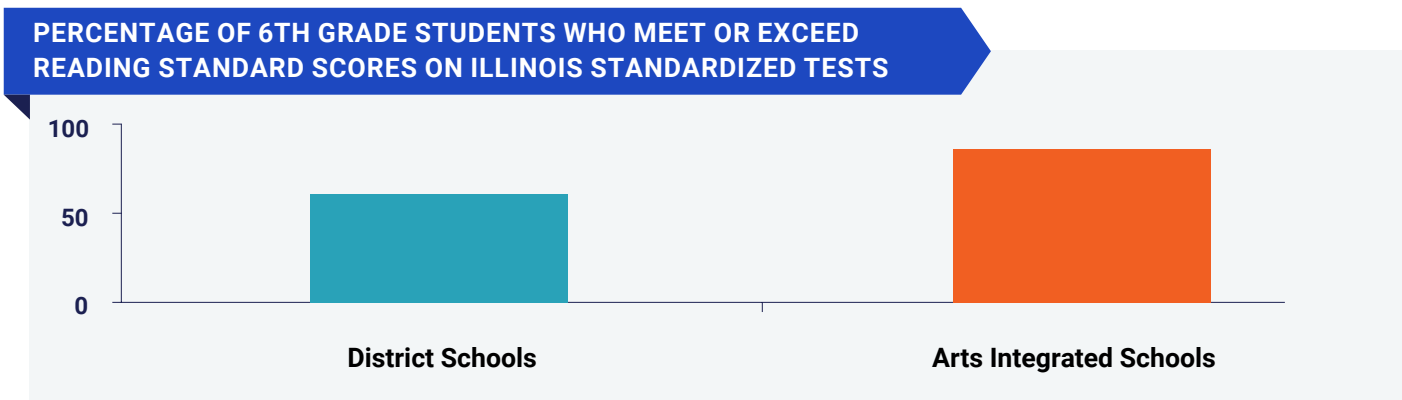
SCHOOLS WITHOUT ARTS INTEGRATED INSTRUCTION: WHAT HAPPENS TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?



The data revealed that **low-achieving students who participated in arts integration consistently increased their academic performance each year**. Further, **the achievement gap between high- and low-achieving students was reduced**. In the comparison schools, while there was some degree of improvement for low-achieving students, they continued to lag behind their peers, and the gaps between high-achievers and low-achievers grew larger.

2. Chicago arts-integrated schools outperform schools across the district

The chart below compares the overall average of 2010 standardized test scores from 6th grade students in the arts-integrated program (students who went through the entire program) to the average scores of 6th grade students from across CPS. This data focuses on reading scores and clearly demonstrates how arts-integrated schools show much higher achievement.



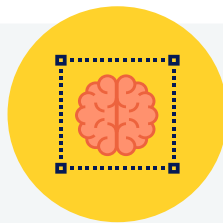
This research offers evidence of a correlation among arts learning, arts integration, higher-order thinking skills, and academic achievement.

Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education's Model for Arts Integration

Arts integration is a transdisciplinary approach in which arts practices function as cross-cutting practices that intersect with academic (or non-art) disciplinary practices in meaningful and intentional ways. Rather than treating visual arts, media arts, music, dance, and theatre as isolated subject areas and disciplines, arts integration methodology embeds aesthetic inquiry, creative research, conceptualization, speculation, envisioning, and problem-solving into the learning process across disciplines. In high-quality arts-integrated teaching and learning, the arts are both the method and the medium for engaging in rigorous inquiry, allowing students to explore complex concepts, represent their understanding, expand their ideas, and reflect on their learning. As a result of engaging in arts integration, students become “Artist/Researchers” with the following characteristics:



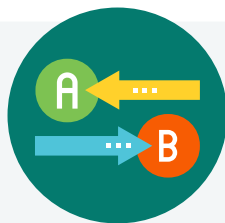
Reflective questioners who learn through a questioning process, revisit questions throughout the art and academic process, and, through reflection, generate new questions at the end of a project.



Critical collaborators who explore together their intersections, conflicts, and contradictions, in order to expand their artistic dialogue and learning possibilities.



Social engagers who use their art as a tool for public dialogue and interaction.



Role shifters who shift their roles from learner, creative, and educator to bring them new perspectives and abilities.



Integrative innovators who work and think across multiple artistic and academic disciplines to develop new ideas and create original work.

The development of these attributes support students’ critical thinking, nourishes curiosity, fosters innovation, and nurtures both cognitive and emotional development. These skills are also highly desired in the modern workforce. Creativity and innovation are an increasing part of work—at every level and in every industry of our economy. In fact, the World Economic Forum’s The Future of Jobs report (2023) listed 10 key skills, including creativity, critical thinking, flexibility, and curiosity, among the most desired traits in the workforce, which is in significant alignment with the attributes developed as a result of high-quality arts integration.

Timeline of Arts Education in Chicago

Laying the Groundwork for Today

1979

CPS shortens the school day. The shorter day, coupled with increasing pressures on schools to perform academically, meant that district and school leaders often chose to de-emphasize arts education. The majority of arts educators are laid off.

1992

The rise of Local School Councils gave individual schools greater authority to determine their own budgets, curriculum, and programming. This allowed individual schools the choice to develop unique arts programs in partnership with teaching artists and arts organizations. Gradually, district leadership began testing out strategies to improve arts education more systematically. The Chicago Public Schools' arts-instructor-to-student ratio policy was 1:750.

1999

The district's Magnet Cluster Initiative supported 60 schools to develop school-wide, curriculum-based programs focused on fine and performing arts.

2002-2005

With support from the Chicago Community Trust, the district launched 17 arts demonstration schools, modeling sequential instruction in visual arts, dance, theatre, and music, as well as the sharing of resources across schools. The demonstration schools were intended to pave the way for all elementary school students to receive equitable, thoughtfully sequenced arts instruction.

2006

Local foundations privately funded a revamped CPS Office of Arts Education, signaling the growing importance of the arts to local civic and CPS leaders.

2008

The Wallace Foundation and RAND Corporation publish *Revitalizing Arts Education Through Community-Wide Coordination* on the state of arts education, noting that Chicago's public schools remain weak in planning and provision of the arts. In response, more than 400 representatives from schools, arts organizations, CPS, and local funders participate in the Chicago Arts Learning Initiative (CALI).

2010

CALI releases its findings in *Collaborating for Change: Expanding Arts Learning in Chicago*, which calls for better coordination of resources to create sustainable access to the arts for Chicago children.



2011

[Ingenuity](#) is founded to carry out CALI's vision. Ingenuity and the CPS Department of Arts begin a close and enduring partnership to collaboratively accomplish the goal of arts education access, quality, and equity for Chicago Public Schools students.

2012

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, The City of Chicago, and the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events led the creation of the first city-wide Cultural Plan in 25 years. In town hall sessions, Chicagoans call for more arts in CPS schools. Ingenuity and community leaders help CPS create the [Arts Education Plan](#), and the Chicago Board of Education declares the arts a core subject alongside traditional academic subjects.

2013

CPS launches the Creative Schools Initiative. Developed in collaboration with Ingenuity, [the initiative](#) provides incentives, accountability measures, Road Maps, and technical assistance to help schools grow their arts instruction. The interconnected strategy includes:

- **Arts Liaisons** as local arts champions in each school.
- **The Creative Schools Certification** is added to the CPS School Report Card, providing parents and community members a quick look at the state of the arts at individual schools.
- **The Creative Schools Fund**, part of the initiative since 2013, has to date awarded more than \$23 million in grants directly to schools.

Ingenuity launches **artlook®**, an [online data-mapping platform](#) that equips CPS leaders and educators with arts education data, facilitates partnerships between CPS schools and arts organizations, and, ultimately, helps drive arts resources to underserved students in Chicago.

2014

Ingenuity releases the first [State of the Arts \(SOTA\)](#) in Chicago Public Schools report that presents findings from the first year of comprehensive arts education data collection, the 2012–13 school year, and sets the baseline against which Ingenuity and CPS Department of Arts will annually measure district-wide efforts to expand arts instruction.

2018

CPS adopts the [Illinois Arts Learning Standards](#), charting a new instructional vision for arts education within the District that focuses on students moving through the artistic process with increased sophistication and skill.

2019

Ingenuity and the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (UChicago Consortium) releases a new report to support educators in the arts and other subject areas in their efforts to contribute to students' social-emotional development: [Arts Education and Social-Emotional Learning Outcomes Among K-12 Students: Developing A Theory of Action](#).

2020

The Creative Schools Certification is updated and implemented, after two years of collaboration by CPS and Ingenuity. This evolved version of the [Certification \(CSC 2.0\)](#) brings increased nuance to the **Access** measures, while adding weight and detail to the **Quality** measures.

2021

Creative Schools Support System (CSS) and Roadmaps are developed by Ingenuity and CPS to provide each school with detailed data on their CSC score.

CPS releases Arts Scopes and Sequences in Music, Dance, Theatre, and Visual Arts as its first phase of [Skyline](#) development. This collection of unit overviews utilizes the Illinois Arts Learning Standards and identifies the key learning at each grade level and high school course. Teachers can utilize the scopes and sequences to align their current instruction to the Standards, gain inspiration for new learning experiences, and ensure authentic student assessment practices.

The Creative Schools Fund partners with Lollapalooza to launch the [Lollapalooza Arts Education Fund](#) to distribute \$2.2 million between 2021 and 2026 to CPS schools with the least amount of arts access.

artlook® Educator is launched. A CPS and Ingenuity collaborative project fueled by the Assistance for Arts Education Development and Dissemination (AAEDD) grant from the U.S. Department of Education. artlook® Educator is a platform for CPS arts educators to network, share curriculum and planning, knowledge, topic exploration, and resources, creating a sense of community among arts educators.

2024

Creative Schools Roadmaps are redesigned to empower school leaders with more accessible and actionable arts education data. These custom planning documents are tailored to each CPS school, offering principals and Arts Liaisons an in-depth look at their arts education Creative Schools Certification rating, along with a comprehensive overview of resources and supports available.

Ingenuity releases the [State of the Arts Dashboard](#) (SOTA Dashboard), a new data tool for stakeholders across the sector. The SOTA Dashboard is an interactive data visualization tool that complements the annual State of the Arts Report.

2025

CPS adopts the *Arts Education Plan 2.0: Cultivating Creativity*.

Ingenuity publishes *Inspiring Creativity: 11 Years of Supporting Arts Education*, the inaugural Creative Schools Fund impact report. The report celebrates 11 years of transformative arts education investments from the Creative Schools Fund, with over \$21 million invested in CPS schools since 2013.

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