

Discussion and Activity Guide

PBS SoCal

ART HAPPENS HERE WITH JOHN LITHGOW

Discussion Guide Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS - 1

ABOUT THE SPECIAL - 2

ABOUT ARTS EDUCATION - 3

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE - 4

HOW TO HOST A SCREENING - 5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS - 7

FAST FACTS: ARTS EDUCATION BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES - 8

ACTIVITY ONE: FOR STUDENTSWHAT ART MEANS TO ME - 10

ACTIVITY TWO: FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS ART, ME, AND MY COMMUNITY - 12

ACTIVITY THREE: FOR TEACHERS

INCORPORATING ARTS INTO YOUR CLASSROOM - 15

APPENDIX:

WORKSHEET: ART IN THE CLASSROOM

TOPIC: THE IMPORTANCE OF ARTS EDUCATION

WORKSHEET: SPEED POEMS TOPIC: THE IMPORTANCE OF ARTS EDUCATION

CONTEXTUALIZING CALIFORNIA ARTS FUNDING AND PROP 28

SOURCES



About the Special

In the new PBS special **ART HAPPENS HERE WITH JOHN LITHGOW (AHH)**, actor, author, humorist and renowned performer, John Lithgow ("Killers of the Flower Moon," "The Crown," "The Old Man") shares his passion for arts education by joining students and teachers at four Los Angeles organizations, diving into four arts disciplines: dance, ceramics, silk-screen printing and vocal jazz ensemble. Celebrating how arts education nurtures and inspires the hearts and minds of students of all ages, ART HAPPENS HERE follows Lithgow as he tries his hand at singing, dancing, printmaking, and pottery, working alongside and learning from young people whose lives are being transformed by art.

Growing up, Lithgow wanted to be an artist and was inspired and encouraged by his public school art teachers. As the years have passed, he has come to see those teachers as his heroes, responsible for instilling him with confidence, curiosity and a sense of self.

"Education involves much more than just the basic academic subjects and preparing kids for being tested and evaluated. Arts education is an anchor that provides a child emotional and social development and a sense of who they are in the world," says Lithgow.

To illustrate his point, Lithgow visits four organizations that are making a difference in the lives of young people: Self Help Graphics & Art, a pioneering Chicano community organization at the intersection of arts and social justice; the Debbie Allen Dance Academy, a nonprofit school offering dance classes to people of all ages; the Community Center of La Cañada Flintridge, home of a nationally renowned ceramics studio; and the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts (LACHSA), a specialized public school open to aspiring young artists throughout Los Angeles County.

As he makes his first pot, collaborates with a young artist on a silk-screen print, learns new dance techniques and gamely joins a group of talented jazz vocal students for a concert, Lithgow revels in the sense of discovery, creativity, and camaraderie that the arts can offer. "The arts give young people tools to move through life. They teach them discipline and hard work, patience and civility. They give young people a sense of empathy. After all, art is about communicating with other people. Through the arts, young people find out who they are and where their imaginations will lead them. It happened to me."

About Arts Education

Making art is not just about a beautiful finished product to be hung on the wall, though that can be a wonderful side effect, the creative process itself boasts significant benefits for individuals and community.

From painting to dance to drama, the arts provide a therapeutic outlet for students, where the stressors of life in and outside of school temporarily melt away, or are channeled productively.

Research points out that a solid arts education throughout Pre-K-12 develops well-rounded adults, contributing to the development of both academic and social skills, improving focus, ability to work with constructive criticism and engaging creative thinking skills that apply to school outside the art room.

The positive ripple effect arts education has on individuals and academic settings include:

- Results in strong math, reading, and writing performance
- Positive effects on developmental needs and social emotional outcomes
- Positive impact on critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Reduces disciplinary infractions
- Fosters collaboration and prosocial behavior between students





How To Use This Guide

9 in 10 Americans believe that art spaces improve quality of life. 72% of Americans believe that the arts unify our community.

- Americans For The Arts, 2018

This companion guide and toolkit for **ART HAPPENS HERE** provides a starting point for schools and school district leaders, school boards, Parent Teacher Associations and other community discussions about arts education, its unique value, and access to it.

The content herein also addresses significant deficits that currently exist in availability of and funding for arts education while encouraging all to work collaboratively to close the "arts gap."

In these pages you will find: discussion questions and other resources to facilitate conversations about arts education, ideally to accompany a viewing of ART HAPPENS HERE. You will also find statistics that support the positive impact of access to the arts and three activities—for students, school administrators, PTA's and educational stakeholders, and teachers—aimed at raising critical conversations about the importance of arts education.

Consider using this toolkit and the ART HAPPENS HERE program in some of the following ways:

- At professional meetings of school administrators at the district level to anchor conversations about arts in the curriculum
- At meetings and/or professional development gatherings for educators where arts education can be highlighted
- At **school board meetings** where a short clip from the film might be accompanied by a brief activity or discussion of arts education in the local district
- In community settings such as PTA meetings or other gatherings where participants are interested in engaging with educational issues
- In any setting where a conversation about arts education and access to it will engage participants and offer opportunities for discussion and involvement

Using this toolkit with colleagues in the professional space can provide opportunities to enhance discussion and broaden perspective about this critical aspect of education that is often overlooked in an environment of constrained resources and competing priorities. ART HAPPENS HERE can help to bring attention to unique contributions that arts education offers.

How To Host A Screening

Screening **ART HAPPENS HERE** can generate fruitful conversations about arts education in public or community settings, or for use in a meeting or professional gathering. For both in-person and online screenings, a little advance planning can go a long way towards a fully engaged audience experience.

Whether you are planning a public screening of the entire program for the community, or a more limited event for your group or organization, or even just showing scenes from the film as part of a meeting or presentation, the tips and prompts below may be useful in planning your event.

Here are a series of prompts for creating a memorable screening event. Pick and choose the elements that work best for your needs from the below options.

CREATE GOALS FOR YOUR EVENT

- Who is my primary audience for this screening?
- What do I want my audience to leave the event feeling or knowing?
- What kind of conversation and/or action do I hope to generate by this screening?

DESIGN TOWARD YOUR GOALS

- Will the audience be better served by an in-person, online or hybrid event set up?
- What event location will be easily accessible and supportive towards my goals?
- How much time should be planned for after-screening activities and discussion?
- Could the event benefit from any special guests, musicians, panels, or community members?
- Are there relevant local partner organizations that would be interested in co-hosting, publicizing or attending this event?

PLAN AND PREPARE

- Assign an event lead for the screening who will keep track of details and processes, as well as additional roles as needed. Such roles might include: audio visual technician, host committee to welcome guests and direct them to their seats, and a promotional lead/committee.
- Choose a strong event host who can facilitate introductions and post-screening activities in front of an audience.
- Troubleshoot technology in advance by touring the venue and testing equipment before the event occurs.
- Create a run of show that details the event top to bottom, measured by time: who introduces the event and for how long? How long is the screening? How much time will be allocated to each activity after the screening ends?

How To Host A Screening, Continued

SAMPLE RUN OF SHOW FOR SCREENING THE ENTIRE FILM OR TRAILER

5:30pm: Set up venue (if "in-person" event) and coordinate arrival time(s) for anyone helping

6:45pm: Doors open (if "in-person" event)

7:10pm: Welcome audience and introduce the evening's activities

7:15-8:15pm: Screen episode or trailer

8:15-8:30pm: Engage post-screening discussion **8:30-9:00pm:** Engage 1-2 post-screening activities

9:00pm: Close out with thank you's, clean up event materials and break down venue

- Take measures for accessibility wherever you can when planning your event: Is the location wheelchair accessible? Can it be accessed by public transportation? Can spaces be reserved for participants with disabilities? Do you plan to use captions or bring ASL interpreters to the event?
- Note: By hosting a PBS SoCal content screening in your community, you are committed to making this
 event free to the public. Usage of the film for private presentations in public service groups and in
 educational settings is also authorized.

PUBLICIZE THE EVENT

- At least 3 weeks in advance, send targeted emails invitations to relevant individuals and groups.
- Use the templated invite and social media guides provided to promote your event.
- Post your event to multiple social media platforms with a link to RSVP to your free event.
- Continue to spread awareness for your event via newsletters and word of mouth!

ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCE DURING THE EVENT

- Consider opening with a brief question related to the screening and invite attendees to share their thoughts out loud or as a journal prompt.
- Utilize this toolkit to engage the audience in post-screening activities!
- Please let us know how it goes by taking the **post-event partner survey**.

PRESENTATION MATERIALS

- A brief slide presentation is also available for use with presentations of the film or the trailer.
- The slides may be useful for presentations in meetings, professional development gatherings and other public service settings.

Discussion Questions

The following discussion questions can be used to open conversation about the value and impact of the arts in educational settings. Touching on various scenes in the full **ART HAPPENS HERE** episode, these flexible questions can be adapted for use with school administrators, teachers, students, and general audiences.

While the questions all reference the **ART HAPPENS HERE** program, most of them stand on their own and can be used in discussion even without the film content. However, screening the film, or portions of it, will enhance any conversation.

- 1. John Lithgow opens ART HAPPENS HERE by sharing that his art teachers were heroes, and influenced him to become an artist. Have you had an art teacher that inspired you? Who were they, and how did they influence you?
- 2. The instructors across the episode hold various qualities conducive to a strong team learning environment. Which instructor resonated with you, and what skills did they hold? How did they affect the students?
- **3.** In the LACHSA choir scene, John experiences the group as a "master class in collaboration." How did collaboration and community building occur across the episode? What skills are students learning beyond the skills of their craft at hand?
- **4.** In the CCLCF ceramics scene, John learns the art of trial and error through the pottery wheel. How do various art forms encourage failure as a valuable experience? How does art help us face our fears? Can you think of a specific example from your own life?

- **5.** At the Debbie Allen Dance Academy, John joins students in the Katherine Dunham technique. Dunham, who was also an anthropologist and humanitarian, incorporated Haiti's vibrant culture into her choreography. Where in your school community do you see examples of culturally relevant arts materials? Why does it matter to offer students reflections of themselves?
- **6.** At Self Help Graphics, John learns about artivism— the act of using art to express social issues. What artists do you know that could be considered artivists? Can you think of any examples of artivism making a difference in history? In contemporary times? Have you ever made, or would you like to make, art to express a message? Please explain.
- 7. Throughout the film, John is coached by teachers and students in his techniques. How can getting critiqued in an art context help to grow our tolerance for feedback in other areas of life?
- **8**. Estrella, a dancer at Debbie Allen, has been dancing everyday since the age of 2 at the studio. How can the arts be a container to teach discipline, commitment and showing up for yourself and others?
- **9.** In the ceramics class, student Rosie discusses that art is about finding beauty in the mundane. How could this perspective be stretched outside of an art practice and applied as a lesson for living life?
- **10.** What other lessons and ideas did you pull out of **ART HAPPENS HERE?** What is your takeaway about the ability of art to shape and create a better version of one's self?



Fast Facts: Arts Education Benefits and Challenges

Research shows that the arts promote positive development in the academic, social, and emotional realms (Chen, 2023). What are the benefits when an educational community values, invests in and uplift the arts as a meaningful contribution to the learning environment? What are the barriers to providing access to the arts equitably across the landscape? How can we bridge the gap to allow arts education to benefit young people across the country?

Use these fact cards as a warm-up to open group conversations to accompany screenings of the ART HAPPENS HERE program, or in any setting where arts education is a topic.

- Cut out each card, and distribute to members of the group–for larger groups, divide participants into smaller groups to discuss and reflect on the fact(s) they have received.
- Invite each participant or group to reflect. Do any of the data points surprise the group members? Which ones and why?
- Brainstorm 3-5 ways you can make arts more accessible in your community, and return to the larger group to share out.

Alternatively, if used in a setting when short on time, consider using these fact swap cards as scrolling facts projected on the screen as participants enter the room. For more studies on the positive impacts of arts education on students, teachers and school communities, visit the comprehensive ArtsEdSearch website.

BENEFITS

Arts education benefits students in several critical ways, improving students' mental health, self-confidence, and life skills. For example, more interaction with the arts have resulted in improved standardized writing scores, a reduction in disciplinary infractions, and the expression of more compassion for peers. (Roege & Kim, 2013) (Bowen & Kisida, 2019)

Students who study music have increased achievement in math, reading and cognitive development, and increased verbal SAT scores. Visual arts support students in their ability to organize their writing and interpret complex texts, such as those included in science courses. Students that take a combination of arts programs also show a greater capacity for more thinking skills such as analyzing and problem-solving. (Arts Education Partnership, 2002)

All students who receive an arts education are:

- -3x more likely to win an award for school attendance.
- -3x more likely to be elected to class office.
- -Twice as likely to graduate.

(Arts Ed Navigator by Americans for the Arts)

The scientific workforce has been increasingly faced with deeply complex issues ("wicked problems") such as global climate change, social injustice, and pandemic diseases that require increasingly creative thinking. The arts can transform STEM teaching and learning, and influence societal problems, by highlighting creativity, innovation, and problem solving as core practices. (Stewart, Mueller, & Tippins, 2019)

Logic and the left hemisphere of the brain typically inform STEM education. However, many studies have proven that areas where the right hemisphere of the brain is used, such as art, support and strengthen creativity. As STEM education aims to propel innovation, adding art to the equation offers students the opportunity to discover their potential by using their brains at full capacity. (Poyraz, 2018)

CHALLENGES

Following a steady increase throughout most of the 20th century, arts education opportunities in the United States have been in steady decline since the 1980s. (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011)

Access to arts education for African American and Latinx people is significantly lower than for their White peers and has been steadily declining for three decades. The decline of arts education is most drastic in underserved populations, where students who could benefit the most from arts education are getting it the least. (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011)

When it comes to arts education, geography is key. A student in the Northeast region of the US is more likely to attend a school with a full-time art teacher than a student in the West or Midwest. (Education Writers Association, 2017)

Students who were eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, which was used to identify low-income students, scored lower in their music and visual arts assessments than those not eligible. Some of the gaps between low-income students and their higher income peers might be explained by the fact that engaging with the arts outside of the classroom can be prohibitively expensive and tied to family resources. (Education Writers Association, 2017)



Activity One: For Students What Arts Means to Me



Time: 30 mins

Materials: Paper and writing utensils, chart paper and markers

Objective: In this activity, students identify if and how art has been, or could become, important to their academic professional, and socio-emotional development.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. SCREEN the extended trailer for ARTS HAPPENS HERE



2. DISCUSSION

- Have you **participated in art making** through school or otherwise? What did you learn from it? (Encourage students to think both about craft, and about personal development).
- Was there a time when **art helped you cope with something hard?** Or **helped you become more interested in a topic** you might not have been otherwise?
- What have you learned about art making in school and/or from family and friends?
- What has **stopped you from feeling comfortable** making or interacting with art?
- Is art valuable to you personally? To your community? To society?

3. BRAINSTORM

Divide the group into pairs or small groups of 3-4. Hand each group chart paper and markers. Invite each group to discuss the following questions and brainstorm answers on chart paper using shorthand:

- How can art help me achieve my own goals? What skills can I gain?
- What careers outside of the arts benefit from the skills art teaches?
- How can art help me become a better collaborator in my community?
- In what ways does art help me better understand myself?

Activity One: For Students What Arts Means to Me, Continued



4. SHARE OUT

Invite the groups to share their brainstorms to the larger group, and engage in a full group discussion about the personal benefits of exposure to the arts, and if they have access to that in their current educational environment. If not, where might they find exposure to the arts outside of school?

5. MAKE A COMMITMENT

Invite students to write a short personal statement of commitment to seeking arts exposure, whether in their school community or beyond.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Google "arts programming for youth + [your city/town]" to search for arts programs–many free of charge–led by local community groups, museums, arts nonprofits and more.

Watch arts programming online, for example, <u>Art21</u> is the world's leading source to learn directly from the artists of our time; <u>"Artbound"</u> is an arts and culture series that examines the lives, works and creative processes of arts and culture innovators making an impact in Southern California and beyond.

Activity Two: For School Administrators, Parent Teacher Associations, and Educational Stakeholders: Art, Me, And My Community

Time: 30 mins

Materials: Loose sheets of paper, writing utensils, chart paper, post-its, markers

Objective: In this activity, school administrators, Parent Teacher Associations and other educational stakeholders engage multiple angles of assessing how much arts education is valued in their own lives and in their educational communities.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. WARM UP: BLIND CONTOUR DRAWINGS

Hand out loose sheets of paper, writing utensils, and invite participants to turn face to face with a partner in order to draw them. Inevitably, groans will erupt in the room. Assure participants that "good" is not the goal– this is meant to be experiential, fun and messy!

Give the pairs one-minute to draw the other without looking at their paper once. Both people are drawing one another while looking at the other. This activity encourages laughter and expressions of self-consciousness aloud. Count down the timer!

At the end of the warm up, reveal the results to the group. Laughter is likely!

2. POST-WARM UP DISCUSSION

- What came up for you while engaging in the activity? Nerves? Anxiety? Freedom? Fun?
- Would you try another drawing exercise after doing this one? Happily? Begrudgingly?
- What did the exercise do for the group? How did the energy shift in the room?
- Does it matter that the portrait might not have been "realistic" or "good?"
- Have you ever experienced an exercise that builds community quickly? Did it involve art?

3. SCREEN the extended trailer for ARTS HAPPENS HERE.

Activity Two, Continued: Art, Me, And My Community

4. FIND YOUR PERSONAL STAKE

Inspired by the trailer, in pairs, invite participants to discuss their experience with art growing up:

- Was it encouraged and supported?
- How was art characterized? As important or superfluous?
- Was it included in their **formal education** or from another source?

Allow participants to talk about what they wished they would have had access to, or what they did have access to, and if it made a lasting impact on their development.

Engage a brief share out, taking notes on chart paper of the ways art helped, or could have helped, in the development of the individual and the community that surrounded the individual.

5. MY COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Hang three pieces of chart paper around the room with the following headers, and invite participants to write answers:

- What arts education is happening in my community?
- Can everyone access arts education in my community?
- What's my vision for arts education in my community?

Lead a discussion for each chart paper and responses, sharing out what was written and inviting participants to expand on it with the following questions, asking one participant to take notes. It is suggested that the answers are typed and disseminated post-meeting.

Is arts education happening in my community?

- What kinds of art?
- How robust is it?
- Is it mandatory or opt-in?

Can everyone access arts education in my community?

- What **barriers** exist for various social groups?
- What resources are needed to fully participate?
- What **support** could be offered to make access more widely available?

Activity Two, Continued: Art, Me, And My Community

6. REFLECTION

Invite each participant to write down and share aloud one reflection that they are taking away from this conversation and any next steps they are planning to take with this information.



FURTHER RESOURCES

The California PTA's <u>Parents' Guide to Arts Education in Public Schools</u> provides an overview of what children across the state should learn in the five arts disciplines by the end of each grade level. It is available in three languages, English, Spanish, and Chinese.

The <u>Blueprints for Teaching and Learning in the Arts</u> provide teachers with a path to follow for developing curriculum in all arts disciplines, and provide benchmarks for what children should know, understand, and be able to do in dance, music, theater, and visual arts at critical junctures in their intellectual, physical, and emotional development.

The Arts Education Manual for School Leaders guide is an administrator's complement to the Blueprints for Teaching and Learning in the Arts. This extensive manual provides school leaders and leadership teams with a comprehensive guide to support the administration, supervision, and implementation of excellent arts programs in schools.

Activity Three: For Teachers Incorporating Arts Into Your Classroom

Time: 60 mins

Materials: Printed worksheets, writing utensils, chart paper, makers

Objective: In this activity, teachers utilize a creative method, speed poems, to generate ideas, emotions and advice connected to their experience with creativity in the classroom. Through individual, small and large group activities and discussions, teachers brainstorm ways to use art as a supportive mechanism within their own classrooms to help students connect creatively to course materials.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. SCREEN the extended trailer for ARTS HAPPENS HERE and invite brief reactions to the content.

2. WARM UP: SPEED POEMS

Hand out the **Speed Poems worksheet** and offer participants 2 minutes to fill out each box as the facilitator keeps time.

3. POST WARM UP DISCUSSION

- Invite share outs from box 1: Write the best piece of arts-related advice you've ever gotten in 5 lines. How does this advice also apply to your classroom subject?
- Skip box 2 for now, and invite share outs from box 3. Write a stanza about a student you've
 seen come to life through a creative assignment. Describe a time when a creative assignment
 helped students learn course material or achieve another goal. Share your success story.
- Invite share outs from box 3: What do you think might have been different for you if you had the chance to experience this art form in school?
- How did this speed poem exercise help facilitate conversation about the topic at hand, arts
 education? Was it an effective exercise for you? Why or why not?
- Speed poems are one exercise that can be widely adapted to various topics, offering an
 engaging creative activity to review content material, make personal connections to topics in
 the classroom, and for a whole host of other purposes. How could you imagine using this
 template to create your own speed poems exercise?

Activity Three, Continued: Incorporating Arts Into Your Classroom

4. BRAINSTORMING

Finally, invite share outs from box 2: Write a 5/7/5 syllable haiku about your favorite form of art.

Break the large group into smaller groups of two to three. If possible, assign groups by the art form they identified in box four. Hand out that Arts in the Classroom worksheet. As a group, review the examples for ways that core curriculum teachers can pair/integrate/connect to art education principles and the ways art teacher can integrate core curriculum into the arts.

Then, invite the groups to brainstorm their own ideas connected to their classroom content.

5. SHARE OUT AND CREATE A USABLE GUIDE

Share out as a group, and allow participants to expand on each other's ideas. Invite one participant to take notes on the ideas that arise and compile responses into an informal guide that can be used and disseminated in the learning community to assist others with leveraging art in the classroom.

FURTHER RESOURCES

<u>Creativity at the Core</u> is a series of professional learning modules focused on many key topics that support standards based arts learning. Regional arts leads representing county offices of education from across California and key arts organization partners collaborated on the modules to be used and customized in a wide range of settings.

<u>Integrating Arts Learning with the Common Core State Standards</u> includes information about the critical role that arts can play in implementing standards and explores, supports, and structures needed to build creativity and innovation into the classroom.

<u>The Kennedy Center</u> offers a variety of resources for building the future of arts education, including classroom lesson plans, digital resource libraries, performances for schools and video-based activities created by teaching artists.

<u>Art in Action's</u> multifaceted lessons develop students' critical-thinking skills, creative confidence, hands-on skills, visual literacy, self-esteem, and an appreciation of other cultures.

NYC Arts in Education Roundtable offers a vast variety of resources from funding for arts to creative lesson plans.

Worksheet: Art In The Classroom Topic: The Importance of Arts Education

1. Write the best piece of arts-related advice you've ever gotten in 5 lines:	2. Write a 5/7/5 syllable haiku about your favorite form of art:
3. Write a stanza about a student you've seen come to life through a creative assignment:	4. What art do you wish had been accessible while you were studying? Write a poetic wishlist:

Worksheet: Speed Poems Topic: The Importance of Arts Education

Here are some examples of ways core curriculum teachers can pair/integrate/connect art education principles and ways teachers of the arts can integrate core curriculum into the arts:

- The science of vocal harmony
- Cultural storytelling
- Pairing lyrics with vocabulary words
- Creating shapes with math principles
- Video/podcasts about history topics
- Mock newspaper or journal articles
- Writing poems or songs based on class themes
- Photography photo hunt on class themes
- Poster creation that illustrates class themes

SUBJECT/TOPIC	SKILLS/INFO NEEDED	SUPPORTIVE ART FORM

Appendix: Contextualizing California Arts Funding and Prop 28

CALIFORNIA'S COMMITMENT TO ARTS EDUCATION

California has held a longtime commitment to the arts in a unique way: schools are required by the state Education Code to offer classes in arts disciplines to all California K–12 students. In 2020, The California Arts Education Framework for Public Schools, Transitional Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve—which provides guidance for utilizing the California Standards for Public Schools—was adopted by the State Board of Education

PROPOSITION 28

California's commitment to arts education was deepened when Proposition 28 was passed in 2022—the largest investment in arts and music in our nation's history, according to Austin Beutner, who authored Prop 28—which ensures an annual funding stream for arts education that amounts to 1% of the state's general fund spending on K-12 (D'Souza, 2023). Focused on building equitable access to arts across the state, the proposition focuses on using a majority of the money to hire arts education staff. Additionally, school leadership has the freedom to determine where and how the funds are best spent.

Before Prop 28 was passed, research suggests that budget cuts left only 11% of California schools to offer a comprehensive arts education (D'Souza, 2023). Now, the new funding will support a vast array of disciplines that are not limited to, but include dance, media arts, music, theater and visual arts–including folk art, painting, sculpture, photography, craft arts and creative expression including graphic arts and design, computer coding, animation, music composition, ensembles, script writing, costume design, film and video.

PROPOSITION 28: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

According to the California Department of Education as of March, 2024, "Funding is apportioned to school districts, county office of education, charter schools, and state special schools based on the share of statewide total enrollment and enrollment of economically disadvantaged pupils in the prior year. The purpose of these funds is to supplement arts education programs." Preliminary entitlement estimates for Fiscal Year 2023–24 can be found by visiting their website here.

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