

Measuring Up: New Hampshire Arts Education Data Project Report

Executive Summary



THE FINDINGS FROM **MEASURING UP: NEW HAMPSHIRE ARTS EDUCATION DATA PROJECT** launch a new conversation, informed by data, about arts education in New Hampshire. What we learn from the data—school by school, district by district, and as a state—is at the heart of this collaborative project.

The *Measuring Up* initiative began by asking public school administrators around the state to respond, on a voluntary basis, to a survey that examined all aspects of the arts in their schools, from curriculum and courses offered to outside funding and artist residencies. The *Measuring Up* report compiles information from all responding schools, creating the first comprehensive study of the scope of arts education in the state. Analysis of this data helps identify opportunities available to students in New Hampshire and find gaps between policy and practice.

Measuring Up documents the level of student access to—and participation in—arts education in the state’s public schools, from kindergarten through grade 12. It provides an overview of the status and condition of education in music, visual arts, dance, theatre, and media arts, as well as a common tool to work toward a common goal: stronger arts programs with greater opportunities in the arts for students around the state.

Policy makers and leaders in the field of education need data to help with decision making. Until now we have had limited arts education data for New Hampshire. Through *Measuring Up*, we can acknowledge the good work that is already being done, address areas of need, take action for change, and sustain a culture of support for arts education—for all students and all schools in the state.

With the report complete, a series of informational workshops will be held around the state. The survey tool will be available to individual schools and districts so they can analyze their own arts programs. Local districts are encouraged to create arts education plans based on their own needs and on recommendations from *Measuring Up*.

MEASURING UP TEAM:

- New Hampshire State Department of Education
- New Hampshire State Council on the Arts
- Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire
- Research and Data Analysis: Quadrant Arts Education Research and Cypress Research Group

PROJECT GOALS

- Inform policy makers, civic leaders, educators, parents, arts organizations, artists, and the public about the current status of arts education in New Hampshire;
- Use this information to develop recommendations that encourage and provide for quality arts-learning experiences and sequential arts education for all New Hampshire students; and
- Develop advocacy tools, training, and resources based on the project findings.

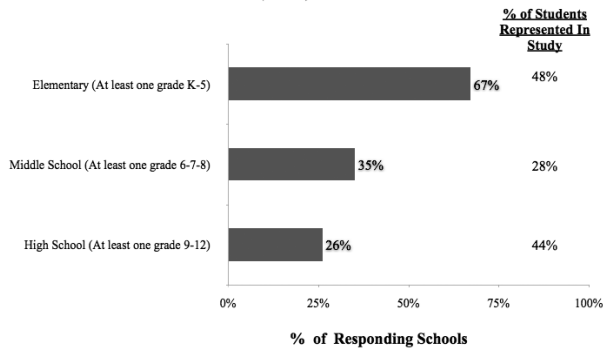
METHODOLOGY HIGHLIGHTS

Data collected represents the 2008–2009 school year

- A total of 153 schools completed the questionnaire, a 32% response rate representing 84,840 students or 43.6% of the New Hampshire K-12 public-school student population.
- The survey questions were primarily based on Ed 306, *Minimum Standards for Public School Approval*.
- Participating schools are shown by school type and percent of students represented. Few schools in the three northernmost counties responded to the survey. No charter schools responded.

Grade Levels of Participating Schools

(n=153)



WHY THE ARTS MATTER

The arts are an essential component of a complete curriculum, defined in statute for New Hampshire within the context of adequacy. If New Hampshire students are to succeed in college and careers, they require the academic skills and thinking abilities associated with the education of the whole child through a comprehensive curriculum.

The arts provide experience and practice in skills deemed essential by employers: creativity, collaboration, perseverance, flexibility, and problem-solving. The arts personalize learning, give voice to the individual, create community, highlight student success in a variety of ways, promote abilities needed in the workforce, and generate positive gains in academic achievement. Many research studies show that students who participate in the arts have higher self-esteem than those who do not, that studying the arts may improve academic gains in other areas and lower the drop-out rate, and that schools that value the arts have more positive school cultures and climates.

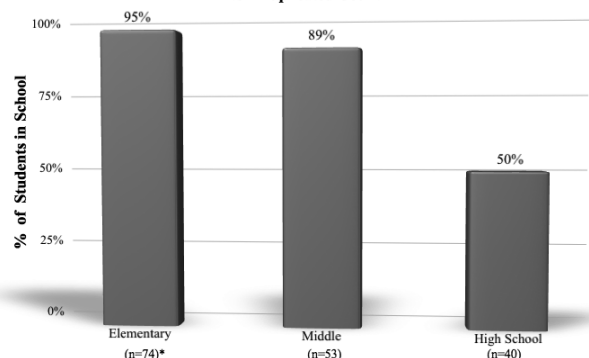
KEY FINDINGS

(Based on results from the 2008–2009 New Hampshire arts education survey. The complete set of more than 75 table reports can be found at www.aannh.org/measuringup.)

- **100%** of high schools and **98%** of elementary and middle schools provide arts instruction in at least one arts course.
- **88%** of elementary students participate in both music and visual arts classes for approximately 50 minutes per week in each art form.
- **73%** of high schools exceed the state graduation requirement of one-half credit in the arts.
- **50%** of high school students are enrolled in one or more arts courses.
- **50%** of schools that weight grades do not include the arts when calculating students' grade point averages.
- **45%** of schools report using arts integration as a teaching strategy.
- **2%** of elementary schools offer at least one course in theatre; **6%** of middle schools offer at least one course in dance; and **6%** of middle schools offer at least one course in media arts.
- **30%** of schools worked with at least one artist in residence; **44%** of these schools find that artist residency programs provide knowledge about other cultures.
- **67%** of schools spend \$20 or less per student on curricular support for the arts each year; **15%** spend \$1 or less.
- **100%** of schools receive outside dollars to support arts education; **54%** of these funds come from parent/teacher associations and organizations and **2%** from local businesses and corporations.

Proportion of Students Enrolled in Any Arts Discipline

Aggregated Data (All Schools Combined)
Non-Duplicated Count



* Not all Elementary schools reported the un-duplicated count of students enrolled in any arts course.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING ARTS EDUCATION IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

These recommendations provide community, arts, education, and legislative leaders as well as project partners and funders with ideas for collaborating on the creation of arts opportunities for students. We encourage you to find one or more recommendations that inspire you to be further engaged in this important work.

1. Align practices and policies that support the arts as essential components of a complete curriculum

Action: Ensure that a variety of opportunities in the arts is available to all students throughout their educational experience. New Hampshire students are receiving an education in the arts, especially in the fields of music and visual arts, but many are still missing out on key opportunities. By reaching higher, we can achieve more. We need to sustain and build on current levels of arts education, expand arts offerings for all students, and value the arts on par with other courses.

- Expand the diversity of arts offerings, especially in dance, theatre, media arts, and creative writing across all grade levels.
- Weight arts courses equally with other high school courses when determining student grade point averages, creating equity among students' course options.
- Develop and implement K-12 sequential and standards-based local arts curricula and assessments in all art forms, with particular attention to creating gateway opportunities for students at the middle and high school levels.
- Provide time for teachers in all arts areas and at all grade levels to collaborate on program goals, curricular materials, and assessment tools.
- Design innovative programs and strategies that offer student access to quality arts education programs and learning experiences, such as establishing a visual and performing arts charter school and exploring extended learning opportunities with professional and working artists.
- Encourage colleges and universities in our state to recommend one credit of coursework in the arts for college applicants.
- Ensure that early childhood programs provide experiences in the creative arts.

2. Use arts-based strategies to support student learning and school improvement goals

Action: Promote arts education and arts integration through professional development opportunities

Research shows that involvement in the arts has a positive impact, especially during early childhood and elementary school, and for students with disabilities and students at risk who may require alternative learning methods. If we are to maximize the benefits of arts education for all students, schools and districts must consider the contributions of the arts in new ways and incorporate the arts into teacher training, teacher practice, and school improvement efforts.

- Create professional learning communities with teachers from ALL content areas to investigate ways the arts can contribute to overall school improvement.
- Include arts educators on school improvement teams so that the benefits of arts learning can be an integral part of school improvement.
- Provide professional development experiences in arts-based content and integrated arts strategies for both arts and non-arts educators as well as school leaders.

3. Build on and utilize current data systems

Action: Routinely collect, share, and report arts education data

Measuring Up utilizes one type of data collection. To varying degrees, new federal and state regulations require other types of data collection in the arts. If we use these and other data systems that are already in place, share the data that is being collected, and analyze the resulting information, we can create regular check-ins regarding the status and condition of arts education in our state. Tracking changes over time and reporting on findings means we will be able to routinely measure and evaluate arts education opportunities and developments.

- Continue to collect data using the N.H. Department of Education data systems and other sources.
- Evaluate the changes in levels of access to arts education using the data from this report as a baseline.
- Share arts education data with researchers to support ongoing data analysis and reporting about arts education in the state.
- Conduct follow-up studies with our most rural communities to learn about the status and condition of arts education and to better understand barriers to their participation in arts opportunities.

4. Leverage resources and ideas to expand opportunities in arts education

Action: Develop a statewide arts education communication network

Our state has much to be proud of in terms of arts opportunities available to students, from outstanding school programs to collaborations and partnerships that include artists and cultural organizations. However, an effective way to share and exchange ideas and information has not yet been developed. A statewide communication network would provide a way for people across New Hampshire to interact and connect, link schools with resources, share information on model programs and innovative ideas, and explore solutions that break through barriers to access and equity where they exist.

- Use the *Measuring Up* website to launch a New Hampshire arts education network.
- Create a web-based forum focused on arts education for the exchange of ideas and research.
- Develop a New Hampshire cultural arts assets map.

5. Increase technology opportunities in the arts for all New Hampshire students

Action: Build connections among New Hampshire's education, science, technology, and cultural communities

We need to give our students every possible opportunity to succeed. New and creative ideas are the business of technology and the arts. New Hampshire is a high-tech state; the relationship between the arts and cultural communities and our science and technology industries and institutions should be developed to build understanding and partnerships across sectors.

- Increase access to digital technology across arts courses and disciplines.
- Incorporate an arts component into high-tech programs (e.g., robotics, video game design, web-based marketing) so that students who excel in math and science can work with those who excel in visual and media arts in creative partnerships integrating engineering with aesthetics.
- Recognize the importance of new media literacies in today's workforce and increase opportunities for students to build their skills in this arts-related area throughout their K-12 experience.
- Establish state guidelines for a highly qualified teacher in media arts so students can receive arts credit rather than elective credit for high school courses in this area.

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PHOTO CREDITS: From left: Courtesy Carol Batchelder, MoCo Arts, Keene; photo by Michael Havey, courtesy Crotched Mountain Rehabilitation Center; photo by Michael Thomas, courtesy Henniker Community School; 2 photos courtesy Denise Freeman, Campbell High School, Litchfield.

To download copies of the full *Measuring Up* report, and for additional resources, information about the project, and a list of advisors and participating schools, go to:

www.aannh.org/measuringup