Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA) believes in the power of arts learning to develop the minds of students, build valuable skill sets and meaningful knowledge, and help prepare students for college and careers in the 21st-century. These and other benefits of arts learning have been demonstrated through dozens of studies over the last 25 years.

While the research conclusions are clear about the positive influence of arts learning on academic achievement, social skills, and workforce development, access to arts learning opportunities has remained relatively static over the last decade. However, the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act and other reforms in school systems throughout the state presents an opportunity to expand access to arts learning in Georgia.

With that goal in mind, GCA has developed a series of slides highlighting the benefits of arts learning, accompanied by adoption tips outlining how local advocates can work to improve access to quality arts learning opportunities. But first, we want to provide some context about current levels of access to arts learning opportunities in Georgia.

- Based on the research conducted for Arts Education in Georgia, Georgia's public school students have broad access to classes in visual art and music, subject areas where the state exceeds the region average, but remains below the national average.

- In contrast to visual art and music, there is limited access to classes in theatre, dance, and creative writing – Georgia is below the region average for access to dance and creative writing, and slightly above the region average for access to theatre.

- Among Georgia public schools, 67% offer classes in both visual art and music. Only 3% of Georgia public schools offer classes in all five arts subject areas included in the survey – visual art, music, theatre, dance, and creative writing. Approximately 4% of Georgia public schools offer no opportunities for arts education.

- Analyzing the survey results geographically, there is much greater access to arts instruction in schools located in suburban and affluent neighborhoods, and only somewhat greater access to arts instruction in urban schools. But for all subject areas, there is especially limited access to arts classes at schools located in high poverty neighborhoods and in rural areas.
Arts Education Benefits and Adoption Tips

The evidence demonstrates that arts education is essential to developing the workforce, citizens, and leaders of the future. That is why GCA has developed a series of 16 slides to highlight the benefits of arts learning and adoption tips to share strategies about how to improve access to arts learning opportunities in schools, districts, and communities throughout the state. To accompany the slides and adoption tips, GCA has also developed a toolkit to assist local arts education supporters in their efforts.

Arts Access Index Map of School Districts

Why does uneven access to arts learning matter?

- Arts learning improves academic outcomes and lifetime potential for students living in poverty
- Arts learning improves academic achievement for English Language Learners
- The arts reach students who are not otherwise being reached through other subject matter, teaching methods, or learning styles
- Arts integration models have demonstrated the potential to successfully turn around failing schools
- Arts education develops critical thinking skills, which are key to college readiness, lifelong learning, and workforce development

About the Arts Access Index: The Arts Access Index is calculated based on student access to arts classes. If students have access to classes in all five arts disciplines included in the survey - visual arts, music, theatre, dance, and creative writing - then the school index will be a five. If students have access to no arts classes, then the school index will be a zero. For school districts that have more than one school responding to the survey, the index for the district represents the average index score for schools responding from that district. The index score is based solely on schools responding to the survey and does not represent all schools in each district. As more comprehensive data becomes available, the arts access index map will be updated to reflect the new information.