



NATIONAL
ART EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION

Platform: Curriculum

Position Statement on Visual Arts as Part of a Well-Rounded Education [Adopted March 2011; Reviewed and Revised April 2014; March 2019; April 2024]

NAEA asserts that the visual arts are fundamental components of a comprehensive education, essential for all students. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, passed by the US Congress in 1965 and reauthorized in regular intervals, recognizes the visual arts as part of a comprehensive list of subject areas, providing all students access to an enriched curriculum.

NAEA supports inclusion of a rigorous, high quality, comprehensive, sequential, culturally responsive, and authentic visual arts program in every school for every child. Art programs should have equitable learning conditions within districts taught by a certified visual arts educator. Visual arts education provides every student opportunities to develop the essential skills of communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and problem solving. Visual art education provides richness and complexity to learning by engaging students in the authentic study of artistic processes (creating, responding, presenting and connecting), the construction of knowledge, and critical reflection

This Position Statement was formerly titled: Position Statement on Visual Arts as a Core Academic Subject. [Adopted March 2011; Reviewed and Revised April 2014; Reviewed and Revised March 2019 when it was also retitled as part of the rewriting.]

Resources:

Definition of Well-Rounded from ESSA Legislation: S. 1177-298 “(52)

WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION. - The term ‘well-rounded education’ means courses, activities, and programming in subjects such as English, reading or language arts, writing,, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, geography, computer science, music, career and technical education, health, physical education, and any other subject, as determined by the State or local educational agency, with the purpose of providing all students access to an enriched curriculum and educational experience.”

Source: The Every Student Succeeds Act

*For clarification on the term “arts” in ESSA, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions did release a report to accompany their original bill (The Every Child Achieves Act of 2015). Although not an official part of the final legislation, this committee report states that the committee intended that the arts “may include the subjects of dance, media arts, music, theater,

and visual arts, and other arts disciplines as determined by the State or local education agency”
(pg. 52).