

Position Statement on the Impact of Visual Arts, Design, and Media Arts Workforce Development

[Adopted March 2018; Reviewed and Revised February 2021; Reviewed and Revised March 2026]

Platform: LEARNERS

NAEA believes, given the research on employment trends and, anticipating that a variety of new career opportunities will emerge over time, that visual arts education is essential to every learner's educational foundation and training for future employment in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. NAEA believes visual arts education is an essential part of every student's educational foundation. In preparation for future careers. When surveyed, CEOs identified creativity has been identified as a critical attribute of employees the number one trait sought when hiring. Since learners are future contributors and creative leaders of tomorrow's work force, this underscores the importance that every learner must have ongoing sequential PreK-12 visual arts education. Learners are the innovators, problem solvers, and creative leaders who will shape tomorrow's world. Ensuring every student has sustained, sequential access to high-quality visual arts, design, and media arts education from preK through Grade 12 is essential to preparing a future-ready workforce and cultivating a more vibrant, equitable society.

Visual arts education develops skills of deeper understanding and divergent thinking. It plays a vital role in cultivating key competencies desired by employers. These skills include while also playing a vital role in cultivating collaboration, communication, critical thinking, curiosity, inquiry, innovation, perseverance, and problem solving, additional key competencies desired by employers. Visual arts education also develops emotional intelligence, as well as the ability to handle interpersonal relationships. Visual arts education also develops emotional intelligence, the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.

Learning in the visual arts, design, and media arts benefits all areas of the business, industry, research, and service sectors. In addition, gainful careers in a variety of art, design, and digital-related fields are abundant and comprise a multibillion-dollar industry in many states and provinces global creative economy. When considered nationally and globally, the financial impact of the arts is compounded exponentially. Providing Visual arts, design, and media arts education to for all individuals is forward thinking, preparing them for successful employment now and in the future.

Resources

Adecco. (2023, January 16). *Impact of the American skills gap*.

<https://www.adeccousa.com/employers/resources/skills-gap-in-the-american-workforce>

See how U.S. executives see the skills gap impacting the American workforce (references communication, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration).

Data Working Group. (2024). *Arts Education Data and Reporting Initiatives 2024*. Arts Education Partnership. <https://www.aep-arts.org/wp-content/uploads/Arts-Education-Data-and-Reporting-Initiatives-2024.pdf>

This article links to many different data sets.

Horita, M. (with Hurst, K.). (2017, October 12). Arts education helps train tomorrow's workforce: A strong arts education helps prep kids for the future. *Americans for the Arts Blog*. <https://www.americansforthearts.org/2019/05/15/arts-education-helps-train-tomorrow%E2%80%99s-workforce-a-strong-arts-education-helps-prep-kids-for-the>

National Art Education Association. (2016, June). *Using arts education to build a stronger workforce*.

SNAAP: Strategic National Arts Alumni Project. Tracking the Lives and Careers of Arts Graduates.

<http://snaap.indiana.edu/>

Wolff, K., & Fulton, M. (2017, September 7). The importance of the arts in workforce preparation. *Arts Education Partnership Blog*.. <https://www.ecs.org/the-importance-of-arts-education-in-workforce-preparation>

Many other resources are linked within this blog post.

Wright, M., Woock, C., & Lichtenberg, J. (2008, October 10). *Ready to Innovate: Are educators and executives aligned on the creative readiness of the U.S. workforce?* The Conference Board.

Americans for the Arts Data.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/research>

- Americans for the Arts' fifth Arts & Economic Prosperity study reveals that the nonprofit arts industry generates \$166 billion in economic activity, supporting 4.6 million jobs nationally and generating \$27.5 billion in government revenue.
- 2017 Creative Industries reports reveal that there are 673,656 businesses in the United States involved in the creation or distribution of the arts.

They employ 3.48 million people, representing 4.01 percent of all businesses and 2.04 percent of all employees, respectively.

A list of James Catterall's research, including *Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art: A 12-Year Longitudinal Study of Arts Education—Effects on the Achievements and Values of Young Adults* (I-Group Books, 2009).
<http://www.croc-lab.org/archive.html>

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