

# Advocating for Arts Education

## Community Toolkit

Maybe you grew up singing in your school choir or took after-school art classes. Or maybe you're a frequent patron of one of Houston's many art and cultural organizations and you want to ensure the next generation of artists and creative-thinkers are prepared to keep Houston a creative city.

As a community member, there are many ways to get involved in advocating for arts education in Houston. From supporting arts education programs to getting involved in elections and fighting for positive policy change, there is truly something for everybody.

"The arts, in general, create an outlet – an outlet for feelings, ideas and creativity. But more than that, there's 21st century skills embedded in the arts... Every child should be face to face with an arts teacher on every level – from elementary to high school."

**Lauren Anderson**

Ballerina with Houston Ballet from 1983 to 2006;  
Associate Director, Education & Community Engagement,  
Houston Ballet; Arts Connect Board Member

*Did you know?*

**A 2019 study conducted at Rice University showed that Houston ISD students who participated in arts experiences had:**

- improved writing achievement
- reduced number of disciplinary infractions
- increased compassion for others
- enhanced school engagement and college aspirations

### Getting Started: The Basics

#### Solutions? No Problem

People are more likely to respond positively when given solutions.

Rather than simply creating a list of problems that need to be addressed, think about how they could be solved. Meeting decision-makers halfway shows just how invested you are in finding a solution, and takes some of the pressure off of them to have all the answers.

#### Put Art Centerstage

It is always best to find ways to personalize your advocacy. When advocating for the arts in your community, try to incorporate stories about what the arts mean to you. Narratives and concrete examples make it easier to talk about complex issues, and help decisionmakers better understand how expanded arts access benefits students.

### Houston Loves Data

There is no better way to advocate for the benefits of an arts-rich education than with cold hard facts. Tons of incredible organizations like [Arts Connect Houston](#) and the [Texas Cultural Trust](#) provide data-driven resources that you can use to best position your advocacy asks!

Houston is also one of the nation's leading cities in collecting arts education data through the [artlook](#)® platform.

### Arts Education: a Lever for Student Learning and Wellbeing

↓  
**2x**

Greater Improvement  
in Math Proficiency

↓  
**15%**

Higher Pass Rate on  
Standardized Tests

↓  
**3.3%**

Higher  
Attendance Rate

↓  
**22%**

More Likely to  
Attend College

Data from: State of the Arts 2021, Texas Cultural Trust

# Get Political

- **Vote.** HISD Board of Education trustees serve staggered, four-year terms. This means that school board elections happen often! As the policy-making arm of HISD, make sure to research who is up for election in your district...and of course vote! See if your registered to vote [here](#).
- **Communicate with your representatives.** Let your local and state representatives know how you feel about arts education. Our representatives help craft education policy and regulations that trickle down to HISD, so holding them accountable to student needs is critical!
- **Stay Knowledgeable.** The laws and policies that shape arts education in Houston are ever-changing. The best way to get started is to sign up for the Arts Connect Houston [Newsletter](#)! The Texas Cultural trust provides a Legislative tracker where you can stay up-to-date on changes that may impact the arts.
- **Extend an invitation.** If you work with an arts organization or perform with a community group, invite your representatives to attend. Providing opportunities for decision-makers to see the arts in action makes sure that it is in the forefront of their minds when they are developing policy for HISD schools.

# Support Houston ISD

- **Experience Art.** One simple thing you can do is frequent arts and cultural organizations. Showing support for the organizations you love makes sure they have the resources they need to offer educational programming for students across HISD.
- **Give thanks.** HISD principals, administrators, and other decision-makers have to balance a lot of competing priorities. So when you see them uplifting the arts, be sure to write them a message thanking them. If possible, thank them publicly online-everyone loves good publicity!
- **Collaborate with the school board.** The HISD Board of Education is a powerful policy-making body that plays a huge role in determining the future for arts education in Houston. And you don't have to a child in HISD to vote for school board trustees and get involved. Make sure to reach out to trustees with stories emphasizing how arts education is important to you!

91%

of Americans believe that the arts are vital to providing a well-rounded education

*Americans for the Arts*

## Additional Resources

[Arts Connect Houston](#)

[Texas Cultural Trust](#)

[Texas Education Association-Fine Arts](#)

[Americans for the Arts](#)

[Arts ARE Education](#)

[Arts Education Partnership](#)

[Arts Ed Search](#)