



**National
PTA[®]**
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ArtsEd

Leader's Guide

Improving Arts Education with a Stronger
Family-School Partnership

Learn to:

- Start a PTA ArtsEd Committee at your school
- Engage more families and build stronger community partnerships
- Lead improvements to ArtsEd programs, practices and policies



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Introduction

THE ARTS ARE CRITICAL TO STUDENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS.

All students deserve the opportunity to take part in the arts, both in school and in the community. The arts can positively affect entire school culture—especially student motivation, attitudes, and attendance—which encourages students to stay in school, succeed in school, succeed in work and succeed in life!

Arts education enables every child to develop the critical thinking, collaborative and creative skills necessary to succeed in the ever-changing diverse and global economies of today's world.

As a parent, the facts and figures probably aren't why you support arts classes for your child. You probably have witnessed the intrinsic benefits of the arts, such as igniting joy in your child or igniting their curiosity to learn and attend school regularly. **We hope that you will use your appreciation for and/or love of the arts—dance, media arts, music, theater, visual art and more—to demonstrate to other parents and teachers in your school community the value of these disciplines for all students.**





DID YOU KNOW?

Students involved in the arts are:

4 times more likely to participate in a math and science fair

3 times more likely to win an award for school attendance

4 times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement

3 times more likely to be elected to class office

[FACTS & FIGURES](#) by
Americans for the Arts

Even though research shows the arts are a good investment for disadvantaged students—boosting academic performance and college attendance, and decreasing dropout rates—schools are not using the arts as a tool to reach these students.

Through this nationwide ArtsEd initiative, PTA and collaborators will empower families—parents, grandparents, foster parents, or any other caring adult in a child’s life—and **amplify their voices as advocates** for improving the availability and quality of arts education in their schools and communities.

Use this **National PTA ArtsEd guide** to help your PTA establish an ArtsEd committee and engage more families in school decision-making—such as improvements to programs, practices and policies. Let’s ensure that every child has access to, and takes part in, high quality and lifelong learning experiences in the arts, both in school and in the community.



PTA ArtsEd Leader Action Steps

As a PTA ArtsEd leader you will work to **ensure every student has equitable access to high-quality arts education** opportunities and **every family is equipped to guide arts education choices** regardless of the student's zip code, ethnicity, race or gender.

This guide provides four steps to build a community effort focused on improving arts education in your school.

1. Learn about your current school ArtsEd program
2. Build your ArtsEd Committee
3. Assess the current ArtsEd program in your school and how well families are engaged in arts education at your school
4. Create and implement an action plan for supporting the ArtsEd program in your school

STEP 1

Learn About Your Current School ArtsEd Programs

Let's get started by learning more about your school arts program and the strides your school leaders have already made. Attend school activities and afterschool programs, and observe the environment before and after performances/during exhibitions.

STEP 2

Build Your PTA ArtsEd Committee

Recruiting a committee of leaders in the arts, family engagement and education is vital to the improvement and expansion of arts education in your school. With members like artists and parent advocates, your committee helps you establish a high-quality partnership with school leaders in support of arts education from the beginning. This will ensure that advocates are heard and all barriers and concerns are considered.

Consider people who are truly dedicated to student achievement and school success.

- **Arts:** Community Arts Organization Leader; College/University Professor; Local Arts Agency Staff
- **Family:** School's Family Engagement Liaison; Parent Volunteer; Student Leader
- **School:** Administrator, School Board Member, Arts Coordinator, Teacher



TIP 1: Set up a meeting with your school principal to discuss your PTA's interest in supporting arts education, gain their commitment to being a part of the ArtsEd Committee and receive their approval to continue the conversation with your school arts coordinator.



TIP 2: Use The Arts Education Field Guide by Americans for the Arts to discover local arts and education professionals and explore their potential role as an effective member of your team.



Tip 3: Lead a positive and productive conversation with your ArtsEd committee:



Spark a broader conversation about the role of the arts in your school community. Develop a shared understanding of how a quality arts education prepares students for success in college and beyond. Consider key facts and figures about the benefits and decline of arts education.



Explain PTA's commitment to arts education and share the vision for PTA's ArtsEd initiative: Families are equipped and empowered to guide educational decisions, while amplifying their voices as advocates for improving the quality of arts education available to all students.



Explain PTA's ArtsEd initiative and what it would consist of (e.g., assessment of programs, policies and practices, implementation of family engagement strategies and evaluation).



Give the school arts coordinator an opportunity to share successes and present challenges they are facing before discussing possible solutions and ideas.

STEP 3

Complete the ArtsEd Assessment with the Committee

Although your PTA ArtsEd committee may have an idea of what to focus on, it is important to conduct a formal assessment to fully understand the arts learning environment, quality of resources, value of community partnerships and strength of school policies.

Organized by PTA's top four ArtsEd priorities, the assessment will help your committee to set goals, discuss common challenges and prioritize your efforts. It will also provide a baseline to compare your end result to and illustrate the impact of your efforts.



Complete the assessment with the ArtsEd committee by answering the questions in each priority area (see [Appendix A](#) for a sharable **ArtsEd School Leader Questionnaire**).



Use the benchmarks in the questionnaire to help you evaluate your school's need for improvement.



Compile the ArtsEd assessment results and discuss with your committee and school principal how well the school is doing to provide access to a high quality arts education.



DID YOU KNOW?

The arts can foster environments that also effectively engage parents, increase parent support, and encourage community involvement.

PTA ArtsEd Priorities

Determine your priority area and objective for where to set arts improvement goals.

Priority 1: Student Access to Arts Opportunities

Ensure all children have access to a well-rounded education including the arts. All students, including at-risk and underserved student groups, feel welcomed to participate fully in arts-rich learning opportunities.

Priority 2: Arts Learning Resources

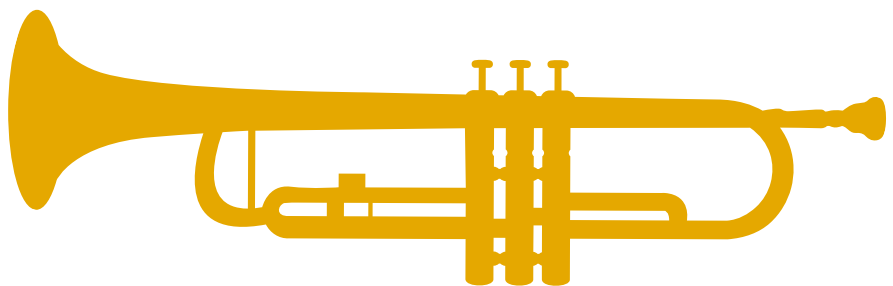
Ensure all arts education programs (both curricular and co-curricular) have the necessary resources and tools to help teachers teach the arts disciplines (Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts) and to help students develop skills necessary for their success in school, work and life.

Priority 3: School-Community ArtsEd Partnerships

Strengthen family and community relationships with schools to enhance or provide new arts learning opportunities and resources for students. Long-term PTA partnerships add value and strength to PTA's role as an advocate for arts learning and may result in professional development for staff, visiting teaching artists and financial resources.

Priority 4: ArtsEd School Policies

Advocate for student and family interests and values of arts education. Schools and PTAs committed to quality learning in the arts can identify opportunities together for families to take an active role in support of arts education. Engaged leaders can increase the capacity and enhance existing programs and activities to provide an arts-rich school.



STEP 4

Complete Your Family Engagement Assessment

Families are a key partner for continuous school improvement. When families feel welcomed and empowered to support student success it will strengthen your family-school partnership, arts education programs and policies will be supported and you will meet your arts education improvement goal(s).

Take a closer look at how families are engaged in the school improvement process as it relates to arts education programs, policies and practices. Educate your committee and others in your school community about the importance of **family engagement**. This means we must agree on what the standards are and what meeting those standards look like.

Consider PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships ([PTA.org/NationalStandards](https://pta.org/NationalStandards)), and lead a candid discussion about the barriers (access, awareness, knowledge, financial resources, perceptions and gaps in opportunities) for families to engage in arts education programs.

Use the **PTA Arts Ed Discussion Questions to Assess Family Engagement** to identify current family engagement practices supporting arts education at your school ([Appendix B](#)).

STEP 5

Develop Your Action Plan

Determine your priority area and objective for where to set arts improvement goals and develop strategies for engaging families in school improvements. Use the **ArtsEd Action Plan Template** ([Appendix C](#)) to document these goals and begin the planning process.



TIP 1: Use PTA's four ArtsEd topic areas to help you focus on one or more goal area. Remember, progress is continuous and may take a couple years to see results.



TIP 2: Present your action plan to the school community for feedback and buy-in. When families feel invited into the development of involvement programs, practices, and policies, there is a greater likelihood of success.



TIP 3: Monitor your progress throughout the school year. Your action plan should be a living document. If something is not working, go back to the plan and make the necessary changes.

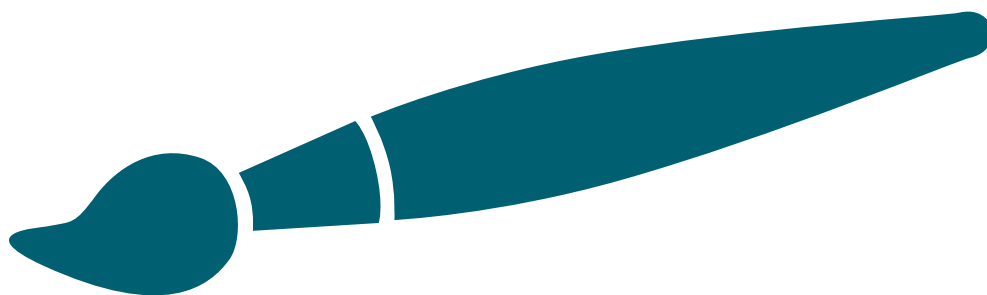
STEP 6

Sustain Your Efforts

At the end of the school year, document your successes and share them with the school community, which includes families, students, teachers, the superintendent, school board members, the local newspaper and other media, community members, businesses and other potential donors, and partnering organizations.

It's also important to understand what worked and what didn't so that you can plan for an even more successful ArtsEd initiative next year. You can engage more people in the school conversation when you measure your progress and publicize your results. You can also repeat your previous assessments to document what your ArtsEd committee improved and identify areas that also still needs to be addressed. Share your results at a school forum or parent night to generate support and further commitment.

Inspire others! Share your progress and success using **#ArtsEd** and **#Reflections**.









Looking Forward

As you plan for the next school year, reflect on how you can build on your accomplishments. Learn from the strategies that were successful, as well as the activities that might need to be reimagined. And, as always, seek opportunities to engage new and different voices in the process.

Get your committee's perspective on the experience of building successful family-school partnerships and improving the arts offerings at your school. Talk about both the encouragements and the challenges. Then, lay out some of the concrete lessons learned. Provide a short bullet list of practices and approaches that have fostered effective collaboration and support, based on the committee's observations and the community's feedback. Be sure to keep records and share them with the next committee so that they may build on your success.

Consider these National PTA offerings to further expand the ArtsEd offerings at your school:

-  Register to host a **PTA Reflections Student Recognition Program** at [PTA.org/Reflections](https://www.pta.org/Reflections).
-  Apply for a **PTA Arts in Education Grant** at [PTA.org/Awards](https://www.pta.org/Awards).
-  Enroll in the **National PTA's School of Excellence** program at [PTA.org/Excellence](https://www.pta.org/Excellence).
-  Learn how to host a **PTA Creative Career Fair** at [PTA.org/ArtsEd](https://www.pta.org/ArtsEd).



Appendices

A. ArtsEd School Leader Questionnaire: Organized by PTA's four ArtsEd priority areas, the questionnaire includes questions to ask your school administrator to help your committee identify areas for improving school programs, policies and practices.

B. PTA ArtsEd Discussion Questions to Assess Family Engagement: Organized by PTA's six Family-School Partnerships Standards, these discussion questions will help your committee to identify current family engagement strategies supporting arts education at your school.

C. PTA ArtsEd Action Plan Template: Use this template form to document your improvement goal(s) and begin planning strategies that will engage more families in school improvements.

References

Advocacy Kit (National PTA)

[PTA.org/Advocacy](https://pta.org/Advocacy)

Arts Education Field Guide (Americans for the Arts)

AmericansForTheArts.org/FieldGuide

Arts Education Navigator (Americans for the Arts)

AmericansForTheArts.org/Navigator

National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

[PTA.org/NationalStandards](https://pta.org/NationalStandards)

Questions To Ask (Americans for the Arts)

AmericansForTheArts.org/Questions