



THE CENTER FOR ARTS EDUCATION

**For Immediate Release**

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## **GROUNDBREAKING STUDY LINKS HIGH H.S. GRADUATION RATES TO STRONG ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

*Data: Good Schools Have More Arts Programs,  
Struggling Schools Are Shortchanging Students*

NEW YORK, NY – October 19, 2009 -- High school graduation rates and access to arts education are closely linked, according to a new study of New York City public high schools released today by The Center for Arts Education.

The report -- titled "Staying in School: Arts Education and New York City High School Graduation Rates" -- is the first-known analysis of the relationship between graduation rates and indicators of arts education. The Center for Arts Education (CAE) correlated different sources of data collected separately by the NYC Department of Education, which have never been looked at together before.

Based on an analysis of data from more than 200 high schools (the largest number for which consistent, comprehensive data was available), over a two-year span, schools with the highest graduation rates offer the most access and resources to support arts education, as measured across nine separate indicators of the resources necessary to provide quality arts education. Students at schools with the lowest graduation rates have the least access to the benefits of a quality instruction in the arts.

Among the report's specific findings:

- High schools in the top third of graduation rates had almost 40 percent more certified arts teachers per student than schools in the bottom third—or, on average, one additional arts teacher per school.
- High schools in the top third of graduation rates had almost 40 percent more physical spaces dedicated to arts learning per student than schools in the bottom third.

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- High schools in the top third of graduation rates had 35 percent more graduates completing three or more arts courses than schools in the bottom third.

“These are all New York City public schools. These disparities should not exist,” said Richard Kessler, executive director, The Center for Arts Education. “We are not talking about urban schools versus suburban schools, or public schools versus private schools.”

According to the report: “The findings, based on data collected by the New York City Department of Education (DOE), strongly suggest that the arts play a key role in keeping students in high school and graduating on time.”

“The central message here is that good schools have the arts,” said Kessler. “At the same time as national and local education policy focus attention on turning around our lowest-performing schools, it’s striking to see that where a quality arts education has the most to offer, students are afforded the least exposure to the arts.”

Outside authorities on education policy weighed in on the significance of the report’s findings.

“This report is of national significance,” said Diane Ravitch, New York University. “It clearly demonstrates the linkage between high school graduation rates and availability of arts education. Young people are more likely to stay in high school when the school offers a solid program in the arts. It also shows the inequitable distribution of access to the arts among children in different communities. The report cries out for immediate action. Is anyone listening?”

According to New York State Senator José M. Serrano, “The Staying in School report represents a significant triumph for our students and our schools by making it strikingly clear that there is a pressing need for an increase in arts education in the curriculum. The strong correlation between the inclusion of arts education in schools and high school graduation rates emphasizes the urgency with which the policy recommendations outlined in the report should be implemented. I applaud The Center for Arts Education for leading the fight to ensure that our public schools meet the New York State Education Department’s minimum requirements for arts education, and for making it a priority that all of our students have equal access to arts education.”

New York City Councilman Robert Jackson said: “Along with conclusively demonstrating a very positive finding that the arts are essential tools to enhance student outcomes, CAE’s study has highlighted the outrageous inequities of how arts programming is delivered. Students of color, English Language Learners (ELL) pupils and students from families below the poverty line are definitely getting the short end of the paint brush. This is illegal, shortsighted, and counter-productive. I call on the State of New York to vigorously enforce State law, and require the Mayor and the Chancellor to comply with State standards for arts instruction in all New York City schools.”

The report’s findings have policy implications, CAE said. “Policymakers should focus on whether schools have the right incentives, resources and accountability tools to offer curriculum and opportunities that inspire students,” said Doug Israel, CAE’s Director of Policy and Research, who authored the report and oversaw the research.

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“The report makes clear that not all students are receiving equal opportunity to an education that includes music, theater, dance and visual arts. We need to close this gap as a first step to keeping students in school.”

The report recommends:

1. Expanding course offerings in the arts
2. Ensuring that all schools have full-time certified arts teachers on staff
3. Expanding student access to the city’s cultural arts sector
4. Requiring adequate space for arts instruction
5. Ensuring adequate resources to support the arts
6. Ensuring school compliance with existing state regulations for arts education

The full report can be downloaded at [www.cae-nyc.org/staying-in-school/arts-and-graduation-report](http://www.cae-nyc.org/staying-in-school/arts-and-graduation-report).

### **About The Center for Arts Education**

The Center for Arts Education (CAE) is committed to stimulating and sustaining quality arts education as an essential part of every child’s education in the New York City public schools. CAE provides tools and resources to deliver quality arts learning for all children. Our innovative teaching and learning programs – fostering collaboration with teachers and school leaders, cultural and community organizations – help build arts-infused school communities. Our advocacy initiatives educate policymakers and the public about the value of arts education and a fundamental part of children’s overall health and well-being. Visit [www.caenyc.org](http://www.caenyc.org) to learn more about The Center for Arts Education.

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