

# HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR THE ARTS AND ARTS EDUCATION

## WHY SHOULD PARENTS & GUARDIANS ADVOCATE FOR THE ARTS AND ARTS EDUCATION?

You are the ultimate advocate for your child; no one else will protect your child's access to a well-rounded education better than you. Standing up for the arts requires a united voice, from all corners of the state.

Additionally, you can join events and activities that encourage other parents and guardians in your community—especially those without personal experience in visual or performing arts education—to seek out these programs for their children's benefit. By communicating your child's stories and additional skills learned through participation, arts education can remain vital and accessible for future generations.

**DON'T DELAY!** The time to advocate for quality arts education is now. We must commit to preserving and supporting arts education with a sense of urgency. Some solutions take time to come to fruition. Thank you for your commitment to ensuring your child—and all children in Texas—have equitable access to quality arts education.

## BE ACTIVE IN YOUR SCHOOL'S COMMUNITY

**JOIN YOUR PTA.** Teachers are some of your best allies and sometimes our children's most fervent advocates. Joining the PTA is an important step in building relationships with fellow parents and teachers in order to stay informed on all your school's programs and needs. Being involved in the bigger picture can help ensure visual and performing arts programs are being considered, especially when allocating PTA funds that reach every student. Some of the best work is done collaboratively, so team up with other parents and teachers around your school district to make the changes that you want to see happen.

At the high school level, join both the booster clubs and the PTA. The booster club will support your specific program and the PTA needs to have fine arts representation to support all arts disciplines.

The PTA has long-running programs that feature arts and creativity. Utilize the opportunities they offer at your school.

**ATTEND MEET THE TEACHER NIGHTS OR OTHER FAMILY-RELATED SCHOOL EVENTS.** Make it a priority to visit the "specials" and "elective" classes and find the administrators at back-to-school night. It is important that you establish relationships with those making decisions about your children's education, both formally and informally. It is also important to show your support for the extra work being a fine arts teacher demands. Attend performances, follow their social media and share their posts, and support extra performances, contests, and recruiting events that help teachers advocate for their programs.

**VOLUNTEER AT THE SCHOOL.** Being inside the school for events like field trips or holiday parties will give you an idea of how the school itself embraces the arts. Is art displayed in the hallways? Are student performances publicly promoted around the school?

**SET UP MEETINGS/CONFERENCES WITH TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATION.** Sometimes all we need to do is communicate. Set aside some time to voice your concerns and ideas. Discuss directly with teachers first and then administration. Maximize the conversation by coming prepared with an agenda, questions, objectives, and solution-based recommendations. If you have already established a relationship through joining the PTA, attending events, and volunteering, these meetings and suggestions will have a better chance of being received well.

**DO YOUR RESEARCH.** Make sure that you collect data from objective, scholarly sources. You want to be as informed as possible as you advocate. The Trust's State of the Arts Report has quantifiable evidence of the critical role the arts have in providing a well-rounded education. Follow arts advocacy organizations' social media accounts, such as the Texas Cultural Trust, to increase your awareness of the latest studies and best practices.

**ASSUME THE BEST.** Many teachers and administrators are not investing in the arts and arts education because they simply do not have all the facts. Always assume that you both want what is best for the students' holistic development. Educate them using data to support this education! Stay focused on what is best for most students, not just your individual child.

In Texas, there are **2.42 million students** enrolled in grades 1-6. Of those students,



**BE PASSIONATE, BUT STRATEGIC.** We understand that advocating for your children is emotional work that is sure to get your passions flaring. After all, this work is paramount. However, sometimes it is easier to catch flies with honey. You are more likely to get teachers and administrators on your side when you call them in rather than calling them out. Be respectful, tactful, and diplomatic, even when you don't feel like it. Think of clever ways to get your message across.

- Send principals in your district goody bags on Valentine's Day to remind them of how "sweet" fine arts education is. Include a fact or figure with the goody bag.
- Send teachers cakes to remind them that advocating for the arts is a "piece of cake."

**TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN.** This may seem like a simple solution, but to many it is not. Spark conversations with your child about the arts at school. Ask them about their art, dance, music, and theatre classes and listen to their responses. What are they telling you about their access to quality arts education?

Join the Texas Cultural Trust as a Partner in the Arts **AND INVITE YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO DO THE SAME.** Together we are shaping the health and well-being, economic, and educational future of Texas through increasing access to the arts for all Texans, including our children!

## PROGRAM AND CAMPUS SUPPORT

- Foster a relationship with your child's visual and performing arts teachers. Ask them what they need for their programs and how you can support them.
- Be active in parent arts education boosters and groups. There is strength in numbers.
- Show your support by attending performances and exhibitions at the school. Follow and share posts on social media. This lets your child and the campus know that you care about the arts programs offered and your child's experiences.
- Be vocal. Talk with campus teachers, counselors, and administrators about what you value and why fine arts education is important to you and your child. Include data and research in these conversations.

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### What is required by the Texas Education Code and Texas Administrative Code?

**Elementary:** Music, theatre, and visual arts Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are required to be provided for all elementary students. There is no district requirements for the way in which arts courses are provided.

**Middle School:** Middle school students are expected to complete one arts course. Districts are required to offer three of the four arts disciplines.

**High School:** One arts credit for high school graduation is required out of a minimum of 22 graduation credits. Districts are required to offer at least two courses from the four arts disciplines.

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## ADMINISTRATIVE AND DISTRICT SUPPORT

- Establish a collaborative relationship with your school administrators. Follow them on social media and thank them every time they showcase something about fine arts programs.
- Approach administration with solution-based responses to issues at the school. Instead of asking administration how they will fix issues, think about the ways that you would, with your perspective as a parent in the community.
- Be vocal and unflinching. Your children need you to be their voice. Make sure you amplify their stories and unique needs, while still respecting that administrators have to make decisions for the good of all students. Data around larger issues like graduation rates, test scores, SEL, and equity will help your argument and can be found in the State of the Arts Report.
- Write a thank you letter to your superintendent and school board members for supporting fine arts education in your district.
- Go to your local school district's website and find out who is on the school board, their history in policy decisions, and the school board calendar.
- Attend school board meetings and follow board members on social media. Communicate via social media between board meetings to keep fine arts education at the forefront.
- Introduce yourself to the school board member representing your district and develop a collaborative relationship to support them in representing you as a trustee for your district.
- Follow all administrators, school accounts, and board members on social media and make sure you like and share any posts that highlight fine arts.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Stay informed of legislative policies that have the potential to impact the arts. The legislature makes many decisions that revolve around education and may greatly impact support for arts education. It is important to understand education policy at the state, local, and district level. Follow local, state, and national politicians and arts advocacy organizations, such as @TXCulturalTrust, on social media and sign up for email newsletters.




- Establish a relationship with elected officials. Once the public officials representing your state house and senate districts are sworn in, drop them a note to congratulate them on their election success. The note can be brief and does not need to ask for anything. Instead, your goal is to establish contact and show that the arts are important to their constituents.
- Tag them in your social media posts about fine arts programs and advocacy. Don't forget to include academic achievements and highlight how being involved in fine arts supports students' success emotionally, mentally, and in preparation for the 21st-century workforce.
- Invite them to performances and inform them of awards the programs receive, etc. (i.e. "So proud of these Dragon band members getting inducted in the National Honors Society #musicmakesyousmarter")
- Get out and vote! Conduct research on who is running for education-related seats in the state, local, and district elections and make your voice heard.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Reaching out to your local newspaper editor is a powerful way to raise awareness about the value of the arts to your community. Know the Twitter accounts for the education and arts reporters and tag them in advocacy posts as well.
- Send your network links to the Trust's advocacy resources and ask them to join you in protecting arts education access for all Texas children.
- Connect with parents online via social media or other online forums. Use this space to share stories and interests while establishing new community ties with one another. Tag @TxCulturalTrust to amplify the power of the arts in Texas!
- Be the voice for arts education in your community arts advocacy groups. Use these groups to meet periodically with other like-minded members of your community who are invested in advocating for the arts. Together, you can all come up with activities, events, and actions that can help spread your message around the community for support.

## SUPPORT THE ARTS SUPPORT TEXAS

While there are many areas of opportunity for Texas, there are also many areas that need improvement in arts access. Help ensure equitable access to the arts for all Texans by joining the Texas Cultural Trust as a Partner in the Arts and invite your family and friends to do the same.

Together we are shaping the future of our state through increased access to the arts for all Texans, including our children!

Learn more about how to promote and support the arts in Texas by visiting [ArtCanTexas.org](http://ArtCanTexas.org) or contacting the Texas Cultural Trust directly.

-  [facebook.com/txculturaltrust](https://facebook.com/txculturaltrust)
-  [twitter.com/txculturaltrust](https://twitter.com/txculturaltrust)
-  [instagram.com/txculturaltrust](https://instagram.com/txculturaltrust)



## TEXAS CULTURAL TRUST

The Texas Cultural Trust is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to be the leading voice for the arts in education, advocacy, and economic impact in Texas, while spotlighting the artistic excellence of our state. Programs of the Texas Cultural Trust include the Texas Medal of Arts Awards, Art Can, Texas Young Masters, Texas Women for the Arts, Partners in the Arts, and Arts Access. Together with our partners we are shaping the cultural, educational, and economic future of Texas.