dear colleagues & friends,

The partnership between Seattle Public Schools and the mayor’s office for arts education began more than a decade ago. Since that time, our joint efforts have evolved into The Creative Advantage, a citywide initiative to establish equitable access to arts education for every student in Seattle Public Schools.

Our partnership has survived and flourished under four superintendents and four mayors. Over time, we have learned that together we can eliminate opportunity gaps in the arts and ensure opportunities for young people to thrive in our city. This requires that we align and coordinate our efforts with community arts partners, teaching artists, teachers, students and families. Together, we are committed to knowing each student by story, strength and need. We are committed to listening and learning. We are committed to creating learning environments that honor and celebrate each student’s personal and cultural identity and to making school a place where students have a sense of belonging. We are doing this through the arts.

As a district and as a city, we also recognize the importance arts plays in developing students’ 21st century skills and resiliency. Our students are facing challenging times, and we are doing our best to equip them with the fortitude to handle the new landscape. Arts education allows us to center student’s individual voices, foster leadership and provide opportunities to explore the world in meaningful ways by creating connections and a deeper understanding of the human spirit. The Creative Advantage has expanded the avenues in which our students, teachers, parents and arts organizations collaborate and access the arts.

When we embarked on this journey, we had a goal of eliminating arts education access gaps. Now, in 2017, we are well on our way to providing equitable access to an arts-rich education to all of our students. We are proud of our collective progress and humbled by the dedication of others to reach this goal. Together, we can realize our collective vision of excellence in education for every student in and through the arts.

Sincerely,

Dr. Larry Nyland, Seattle Public Schools Superintendent and Mayor Jenny A. Durkan

arts education in seattle public schools includes...

dance, media arts, music, theatre, visual arts, and arts integration taught by certificated teachers and through learning experiences facilitated by teaching artists and community arts organizations in and out of the school day.

21st century arts learning

All disciplines are taught as a means of expression, culture, identity, and ideas, and intentionally foster the 21st century skills of creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, growth mindset, and perseverance.

Culturally responsive teaching

Culturally responsive teaching is an instructional practice that recognizes students as the center of learning. Culturally responsive teaching integrates the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and varied learning styles of students as an entry point to make learning more relevant and effective. Culturally responsive educators understand the importance of building relationships and having social-emotional connections to students in order to create a safe space for learning.
what is the creative advantage?

The Creative Advantage is a city-wide initiative to establish equitable access to arts education for each and every student in Seattle Public Schools. The Creative Advantage is made possible through a public-private partnership with Seattle Public Schools, the City of Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, the Seattle Foundation, and community arts partners.

Seattle Public Schools
Expands students’ access to arts teachers and classes, transforms arts curriculum to incorporate 21st century skills, and helps schools develop arts-rich communities.

Seattle Office of Arts & Culture
Increases students’ access to professional artists and arts organizations and provides training for teaching artists and teachers.

Community Arts Partners
Engage students and teachers in learning that integrates arts into other subject areas and in cultural arts experiences.

Seattle Foundation
Acts as the fiscal sponsor of The Creative Advantage.
seattle public schools 2016-17 at-a-glance

Mission
Seattle Public Schools is committed to ensuring equitable access, eliminating opportunity gaps, and excellence in education for every student.

Vision
Every Seattle Public Schools’ student receives a high-quality, 21st century education and graduates prepared for college, career and life.

Student demographics

Total enrollment: 54,976
Schools: 99
Languages/dialects: 143
Graduation rate: 76.9%
Educators: 4,810
Budget (FY 16-17): $789.7 M

Schools with dance: 2
Schools with multi-arts: 11
Schools with music: 68
Schools with theatre: 15
Schools with visual arts: 62
Arts teachers at SPS: 208

“Providing arts allows young people to really explore who they are and who they can be as people. Helps them reflect on their life and helps them form their core values as people”
— Daniel Pak, Co-Founder, Totem Star Records
approach
how we do what we do...

Arts Instruction in Schools
Seattle Public Schools invests in hiring arts teachers, developing district guidelines to meet Washington State Basic Education laws, and providing resources like instruments, art supplies, and text books to ensure that every student has a well-rounded education and access to high quality arts instruction taught by certified arts teachers.

Regional and School Arts Planning within K-12 Pathways
The Creative Advantage is implementing in regional pathways to ensure sequential arts learning from kindergarten through high school. A regional pathway is defined by a neighborhood’s elementary, middle and high schools. Each pathway’s principal cohort creates a long-term regional arts vision that articulates their goals for arts instruction, integration, partnerships, and community arts events. Then, each school forms their own arts team made up of school staff, parents, youth, and community artists to develop school arts plans that honor their unique school community.

Community Arts Partnerships
The Office of Arts & Culture provides funding and support for schools to collaborate with teaching artists and arts organizations. Schools select from The Creative Advantage Community Arts Partner Roster—a vetted list of teaching artists and community arts and culture organizations who provide integrated and cultural arts learning for students and teachers, and exposure to different methods of expression and viewing the world.

Professional Development
The Creative Advantage partners with Seattle Art Museum to provide professional development for teachers and arts partners on themes such as culturally responsive teaching, trauma informed practice, social and emotional learning, arts integration, and 21st century skill development. Funding from The Creative Advantage also supports partner-led trainings for teachers, including integrating dance into physical education, media-arts integration and theatre integration.

Evaluation
The BERC Group, a local evaluator, annually tracks students’ access to arts learning across the district; the quality of arts instruction; use of culturally responsive teaching practices; student demonstration of 21st century skills; and the impact of arts learning for students both while they are in school and after graduation.

“A lot of students can read, but they don’t necessarily comprehend. Creativity opens the doorway in our brain and allows us to think more deeply and complex and absorb what we are learning. It makes us better learners in any environment.” — Riley Delora, 10th grade
Equitable access to arts instruction is our mission in The Creative Advantage. Arts instruction is an essential component of educating the whole child and preparing students for college, career and life in the 21st century. The foundation for The Creative Advantage was set in 2011 with a generous grant from the Wallace Foundation to develop a plan for SPS to provide high quality arts education equitably across the district. The grant allowed the district to accelerate its efforts to address systemic barriers to students’ access to arts, and increased its capacity to expand its goals.

The Creative Advantage utilizes the resources of the district, city and arts organizations to provide a K-12 continuum of arts learning in schools. Comprehensive research conducted throughout the district showed that arts access gaps were the greatest for students of color, low-income and English Language Learners (ELL) students. The Creative Advantage is dedicated to eliminating these access gaps and in 2013 began with the Central Arts Pathway where arts access was the most inequitable.

**History of arts education at Seattle Public Schools**

- **1960s**: SPS is a nationally recognized leader in music education, employing 30 Elementary Instrumental Music teachers in the District.
- **1960s**: SPS Office of Arts Education is eliminated.
- **1974**: SPS pilots the Arts and Education Program to expand SPS’s arts and music program to include dance, drama, media and literary arts.
- **1975**: Recession leads to a double school-levy failure. All elementary arts specialists are cut.
- **1980**: SPS changes from a neighborhood school model to school choice to promote desegregation.
- **1980**: An arts education partnership between the City and SPS is launched. A Music Instructional Coach is hired.
- **1980**: The School Board adopts new music curriculum and allocates over $400,000 for new instruments.
- **1970s**: Nate's story illustrates how:
  - Arts increases student engagement “There are days where that was the only reason that I came to school, so I could come here and practice the drums.”
  - Arts helps students build hidden strengths “I never thought that this was something I was capable of doing. I’d never played any instruments or done anything like that before. It’s been really cool. It’s been eye-opening for me, for sure. Now I see that really anyone can do it if they really wanted to, if they just spent some time doing it. That’s all it takes, a little bit of practice.”
  - Arts can build a more positive school climate “This is one of the only places where everybody’s accepting...you know you’re safe and you’re not being judged by everybody. Kids are more open and willing to work with each other. This school has changed so much.”

2016-17 was the first year of implementation for The Creative Advantage at Southwest Interagency High School. The school is part of Interagency Academy, a network of small, alternative high schools spread out across Seattle designed to provide students with personalized support from staff who are trained in trauma-informed practice. Many of the students have had negative experiences with discipline or chronic absenteeism at large high schools and at Interagency, they get more personalized support from staff who are trained in trauma-informed practice.

2011: SPS receives a $1M grant from the Wallace Foundation that allows the district to collaborate with the City, arts organizations, and teachers to develop a comprehensive multi-year arts plan.

2012: Washington State Supreme Court rules that the state must amply fund K-12 education by 2018.

2013: The Creative Advantage is launched in the Central Arts Pathway.

2015: South-Southwest Arts Pathway launched.

2017: The City of Seattle passed a new Pathway launches.


2017: Southeast Arts Region and Media Arts Skill Center launched.

**History of arts education at Seattle Public Schools**

2010-12: The School Board adapts new music curriculum and allocates over $400,000 for new instruments.

2011: Seattle Arts Commission and Office of Arts & Culture partner with SPS to re-establish the Visual & Performing Arts Department and hire a Program Manager.

2011: The creative advantage is dedicated to eliminating these access gaps and in 2013 began with the Central Arts Pathway where arts access was the most inequitable.
**goals**

*every student in every school receives...*

1. High quality arts instruction that teaches sequential arts skills and techniques, develops students’ 21st century skills and is culturally responsive

   Evidence of Culturally Responsive instruction in Central Arts Pathway classrooms is **34%** higher than the statewide average since 2014 in Central Arts Pathway schools

2. Instruction from certified arts teachers

   - K-5 music programs: **43** in 2012-13, **24** in 2016-17
   - K-5 visual art programs: **44** in 2012-13, **24** in 2016-17

3. Integrated arts instruction

4. Arts partnerships with community-based organizations and teaching artists

   - **97** partners on the Creative Advantage roster
   - **39** partnerships in **19** schools

5. Opportunities to connect arts to careers in high school

   - **86** Media Arts students earned CTE credit through Summer Skills Center in 2016

**Media Arts at the Seattle Skills Center**: creation of a preparatory course for high school students interested in creative industry careers
funding

Integrating arts back into SPS requires investments from the City, District, individual schools, families, students, community arts partners, and private donors. The investments below reflect staff and program investments from 2016–17.

The Creative Advantage leadership team

Kate Baker  Creative Advantage Project Manager for Media Arts, Seattle Public Schools
Calandra Childers  Deputy Director, Seattle Office of Arts & Culture
Lara Davis  Arts Education Manager, Seattle Office of Arts & Culture
Randy Engstrom  Director, Seattle Office of Arts & Culture
Dan Golosman  Skills Center Principal, Seattle Public Schools
Dr. Brent Jones  Chief Strategy & Partnerships Officer, Seattle Public Schools
Dr. Kyle D. Kinoshita  Chief of Curriculum, Assessment & Instruction, Seattle Public Schools
Audrey Querns  Creative Advantage Project Manager, Seattle Public Schools
Gail Sehlhorst  Visual & Performing Arts Manager, Seattle Public Schools
Cashel Toner  Executive Director of Curriculum, Assessment & Instruction, Seattle Public Schools

thank you