The California Arts Education Data Project FAQs

Q1: What is the California Arts Education Data Project?

A: The California Arts Education Data Project is designed to increase participation in arts education across the state by analyzing and reporting school-level data on arts education courses and middle and high school enrollment for California. Presented in a user-friendly, color-coded dashboard, the Project provides important information to education leaders, teachers and parents about levels of access to and enrollment in arts programming in schools. The dashboard allows users to review school-level, district, county and statewide data and presents the statewide averages as the baseline for comparison. The executive summary and dashboard report data from 2013–2014 through 2017–2018 from 3,736 schools, covering more than three million students in grades 6 through 12 which is roughly half of California's student population.

Q2: Why is the Data Project important?

A: The Data Project responds to the need that the 2015 Blueprint for Creative Schools identified for better collection of data on access and equity in arts education. The Data Project provides leaders at the state, district and school level – as well as parents and advocates – with the information they need to determine the status of arts education access and what inequities exist. Ultimately, by having a complete picture of where California's secondary schools currently stand, leaders will be able to take steps to close gaps in access to a core arts education curriculum in their districts.

Q3. Who is involved with the Data Project?

A: Create CA and the California Department of Education are launching the Data Project as part of the Arts Education Data Project, a national effort led by the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education and Quadrant Research to collect and analyze arts education data in coordination with state departments of education. California was in the first cohort in 2016, along with North Carolina, Ohio and Wisconsin. Arizona, Tennessee and New York joined in 2018 with nine more states joining in 2019.

Along with the Data Project, the organizations have provided *The California Arts Education Data Project: A Roadmap for School Districts* to guide districts through the process of examining their data to better understand their unique circumstances and challenges. The Roadmap contains resources and helpful guides to assist districts in assessing their own programs and creating strategic arts plans. In addition, they have provided the *California Arts Education Data Project Communication Toolkit*, which provides materials to share these new resources with local stakeholders.

Q4: How was data obtained for this project?

A: The source of data comes directly from information schools submitted through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) - California's K–12 longitudinal data system from 2013–2014 through the 2017–2018 school years. The project reports on student enrollment in arts education courses for schools with grades 6 through 12, which includes high schools, intermediate/middle/junior high schools and elementary/high combinations schools. As a result, the report covers 3,736 schools with a total population of 3,114,273 students. Demographic data is from the Common Core of Data file from the National Center for Education Statistics. Data will be added annually, allowing the project to show progress over time.

Q5: Does the effort include arts education data from elementary schools?

A: As California elementary schools are not required to report subject-level data, information on arts education in grades pre-k through 5 is currently not included.

Q6: How are private schools and charter schools reflected in the data?

A: Private schools are not required to report to California's K–12 longitudinal data system and therefore are not included in the data. Charter schools are public schools, and thus are required to report data and are included in the project. Some of the dashboard allow for filtering types of schools to obtain discrete data.

Q7: What is the process for registering new information if we discover that our arts data has changed?

The data displayed is taken directly from CALPADS. If you have any questions about your data, we recommend you start by examining how you assigned your course codes. Each year data is submitted in October and there are several weeks in December/January where that year's data can be corrected. Data from past years cannot be corrected but it is important to make sure course codes are correct and that your arts offerings are properly reflected going forward.

Q8: What does the Data Project tell us about arts education in California?

A: The data reinforces the need to continue to address inequities in access to and participation in arts education. The data shows the greater the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch, the lower the participation rate in the arts. In addition, the data indicates that the proportion of students without access to any arts courses was higher where the majority of students in the school are either African American or Hispanic when compared to the total student enrollment distribution. This underscores how access to arts education is directly linked to fundamental inequities in our education system.

Q9: Why aren't more students taking arts education courses even when they are available in their schools?

A: There are many potential reasons why students may not be enrolling in available arts courses that map to each school's unique student population, school environment and course offerings. Districts should consider forming a data team to take a closer look at the data and what factors might be challenges for student enrollment.

Some possible factors to consider include:

- Guidance counselors may not be aware of the growing creative workforce and may be advising students not to sign up for arts education courses;
- Due to limited class availability and scheduling, students may be unable to fit the desired arts programs into their school day;
- Students may be unable to take electives because of more intensive math and language arts requirements; and
- Students may feel unskilled and intimidated if arts education courses were missing or limited in their elementary schools.

Q10: What does enrollment in rural or small schools tell us about the challenges they face?

A: School districts in rural communities are more likely to have smaller enrollment sizes and fewer resources, which often translate into fewer course offerings. However, rural districts could work around these challenges by using a shared services model in which arts teachers are shared among schools and among districts. Rural districts could also consider distance learning options and arts integration provided by the General Classroom teacher in grade K-6.

Q11: What historic factors have contributed to the decline of arts education in California's public schools?

A combination of national and statewide actions led to a decline in arts education in California's public schools over the past forty years. In 1970, California passed the Ryan Act, which eliminated training in arts education instruction from the requirements of the multi-subject teaching credential. This change opened the door for the next generation of elementary school teachers to enter the classroom, unprepared to deliver arts education instruction to elementary school students. In 1978, nearly two-thirds of California's voters passed Proposition 13, reducing property tax rates on homes, businesses and farms by approximately 57% and causing districts to cut back on budgets. Arts education was one of the hardest hit areas. In 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act into law, which narrowed the focus of schools on literacy and math, further isolating arts education from the core curriculum that schools are required to provide. It provided the justification for districts to cut programs in the arts, which were not often seen as directly benefiting student success. Last, the California budget crisis stripped funding for arts education in 2008 as districts scrambled to make ends meet with fewer resources.

Q12: What funders support this effort?

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