Your Child, Your School and the Arts

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN IN GRADES 3-5
“When I paint, the sea roars. The others splash about in the bath.”
—SALVADOR DALI, PAINTER
All great cultures on all continents have celebrated the arts

New York City is one of the cultural capitals of the world, famous for its dance, galleries, theater, architecture, music, fashion and FUN.

Because your kids are in school in New York City, they get to live with and love all this ART.

With the arts all around, we’re exposed to other cultures, new ways of thinking, of expressing ourselves and communicating with one another.

Learning in and through the arts in school:

- Encourages positive risk-taking
- Supports problem solving skills
- Promotes sharing
- Enlivens imagination
- Enhances critical thinking skills

“Every child is an artist.” —PABLO PICASSO

Art can encourage and motivate kids in all aspects of their school lives.
As you've probably noticed, your kids are spending a lot of their days preparing for, and taking, standardized tests. In grades 3 through 5, the arts are being squeezed out of school curriculum in favor of test prep. But the arts don't detract from good test scores—in fact, they help your children in all areas of their school lives.

Of course, the arts give kids a productive, expressive break in their school day. But more than that, they provide a multi-sensory approach to learning, which—many say—can help with the test-heavy curriculum overall.

One major study shows that 30 percent of all people are visual learners, 30 percent learn best through listening and talking, and 40 percent learn most effectively through their bodies—through touch and movement and physically doing projects. Kids simply can’t practice filling in test bubbles all day long and be productive learners!

The arts incorporate all three learning styles: visual, auditory and physical. And they’re a vital part of a balanced education.

And luckily, teachers, elected officials, principals—they all know—how important arts are in a child’s education, and in his life.

**IN FACT, ARTS EDUCATION IS THE LAW!**

**In New York State, every child in grades 3-5 now must have arts instruction every week.**

“**When you combine a book with an art project you connect it to something tangible. Reading a book is a wonderful activity but then when you take that book, put it up on its feet, step into this character’s shoes, you’re cultivating empathy with characters, you’re making text-to-self connections and, also, it speaks to different learning styles.”**

——BROOKE BOERTZEL, MAKING BOOKS SING, AN ARTS PROGRAM IN 22 NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS
The arts provide a better school experience. Numerous studies have shown:

- The arts teach leadership and encourage discipline, which kids can apply to their homework and classwork.
- The arts can build language skills through drama and collaboration.
- Visual art can help boost math skills through lessons in perspective, shapes and alignment.
- Music uses math with its time signatures, tempo and rhythm.
- The arts can be used to talk about history, culture or social studies.
- Dance and theater can provide confidence to children who grasp concepts through movement and their bodies.
- The arts can extend children’s attention spans so they’re more focused in their other classes.

The arts prepare kids for the future...

Jobs in the 21st century require creative workers who can solve problems, work in teams of diverse people, multi-task and think outside the box. Participation in the arts develops all of these skills.

Many jobs require some type of writing, and our children are woefully under-prepared in this area. The National Assessment of Educational Progress found that one in four fourth graders were not writing at grade level. Many arts programs, like theater and creative writing, incorporate writing and boost these vital skills.

And for college...

If you want your child to go to college, he needs to show good grades and test scores in math and reading, but he must also provide a well-rounded college application. This means participating in after-school activities and volunteer work, clubs and artistic pursuits. College admission offices appreciate students who are proficient in one or more art, and the skills your kids learn in art classes will help them succeed in a college environment.

“Not every child loves math and writing, but art can make them love math and writing.”

—VALERIE, PS 361
The arts also...

✔ Develop self-discipline.

✔ Are about expression of all kinds. Sometimes kids can paint or write or sing feelings they could never say, and art can be used as a tool for anger management.

✔ Are empowering. When kids feel successful in arts activities, they can imagine success in other areas, too.

✔ Encourage team building, sharing and learning from one’s peers.

✔ Open kids’ eyes to other cultures.

✔ Help create peace in the home. When kids make art together, they learn to cooperate and appreciate each other’s talents.

✔ Help kids with learning disabilities like dyslexia. According to the International Dyslexia Association, dyslexic learners are multi-sensory learners, and the arts employ multiple senses.

✔ Encourage curiosity.

✔ Help build lifelong learners.

“All art requires courage.”

—ANNE, PHOTOGRAPHY CURATOR

“Art teaches problem solving because with art, there’s always another solution, another answer. It’s so important.”

—CRAIG, FATHER AT PS 198

“I draw myself as I am, and like I want to be. When I draw myself, I am athletic and I don’t argue.”

—TARIK, 10, STUDENT AT PS 198
While arts in schools is the law, there are still hundreds of schools that don’t offer any arts instruction. In fact, 1 out of every 5 schools does not currently employ a certified arts teacher. Where does your school stand? Without the arts, your school may not be giving your child the rich, quality education he or she deserves.

This is why parents need to GET INVOLVED! Make sure your child’s school provides arts instruction, and if not, ask: WHY NOT?

What the state requires

New York State Law mandates 20 percent of a third grader’s week be devoted to arts instruction. This amounts to about five hours a week or one hour per day.

Fourth and fifth graders must receive two-and-a-half hours per week or approximately a half-hour per day of arts instruction.

At the federal level, the No Child Left Behind Act lists the arts as a core academic subject along with math, English, science and other subjects. New York State has created “learning goals” for each discipline—visual art, dance, music and theater—for every grade. Based on these learning goals, the New York City Department of Education has published a comprehensive *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts—Grades preK-12* for principals and teachers that provides common benchmarks and curriculum goals for dance, music, theater and visual arts.
How to find out:

- **Ask your child** how often she’s studying visual art, music, dance or theater. Ask her to bring home her artwork.
- **Visit the school.** Is there children’s artwork on the walls? Are there bulletins posted about extra-curricular arts programs? Is there an art room or other space designated specifically for the arts?
- **Meet with your preferred contact:** your child’s teacher, principal, assistant principal or parent coordinator to ask what arts learning the school provides. You can also send a note to school with your child, asking the teacher to contact you.

**Talk to your principal!**

You are the expert on your child and your child’s needs, and it’s important to reach out to your principal and explain why the arts are important.

**When you talk to your teacher, principal or other school official, ask them:**

- Does every grade receive arts instruction every week? (See p. 5 for state requirements.)
- Is there a budget for the arts?
- Is there a designated arts teacher either in visual art, music, theater or dance?
- Is there a school arts committee of the PTA or PA? (If you’re interested in this, you might be able to join!)
- Do classes take field trips to museums, theaters and other cultural institutions?
- Do teachers use the arts to help them teach reading, math and/or social studies content?

“I like making arts and crafts. It inspires me to have a nice imagination.”

—CARMEN, GRADE 4, PS 112

“Parents are major stakeholders, major team players in a school—for them to talk about how they think art is important and to have that kind of dialogue is key.”

—KEVIN, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL
According to the Department of Education, 1 in 5 schools does not currently employ an arts instructor. If your child’s school doesn’t have arts programming, you can ask the principal to:

- **Explore** the possibility of hiring an arts teacher or partnering with a cultural institution
- **Identify** a classroom just for arts classes, or set aside time in the gym each day for creative activities
- **Start an arts committee** made up of parents, teachers and school officials to design arts programs and after-school activities, and fundraise for arts programs
- **Make sure** field trips to museums and other cultural institutions are scheduled
- **Reach out** to parents, asking if they have creative skills or arts knowledge they would like to share with the school community
- **Contact CAE** (email parents@CAE-NYC.org) for tips on how to find and work with outside arts organizations

**REMEMBER:** Arts learning is the LAW! Every child deserves a quality education that includes the arts!

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”
—ARISTOTLE

---

**What to ask for:**

- **You can also get involved...**

  If you have an artistic skill you can teach, you may be able to bring it to the classroom. Talk to your child’s teacher.

  You can build a team of other parents committed to arts programming and share ideas, fundraise, find local teaching artists and encourage your school to increase their commitment to the arts. Contact CAE’s Parents as Arts Partners (PAAP) for more information (see p. 9).

**Other things you can do:**

- **Talk with the parent coordinator** at your school about the need for arts
- **Attend a PTA meeting** to talk with other parents about this. You can get contact information by calling your school’s main number
- **Send a message** to the Schools Chancellor, telling him you think the arts are important. There’s a detachable postcard inside this Guide
- **Share** this Guide with other parents—pass it around!
  Or call CAE to order more guides for your school: 1-877-434-ARTS
- **Visit** the CAE website for more ideas: www.cae-nyc.org
Make art at home!

When creativity moves beyond the classroom and into family life, kids learn to value it even more. Plus, art activities can deepen family bonds. Here are some ideas:

Suggestions from other parents:

- Tell them, “Go draw me a lake, draw me a fish, draw me a tree, draw me a sun,” and they get excited just because you’re telling them to draw and they want to show you they can do it. —Shenita, mom at PS 112

- Go to free concerts or performances in the parks. Go to museums. Take walks. Notice and discuss all the art, architecture, fashion and music all around you. —Jackie, mom at PS 161

- Paint together between cooking and cleaning. And talk while you’re painting. You’re playing but at the same time you’re asking each other how you feel. —Giselle, mom at PS 112

- Watch television programs about art or great cultures and then talk about them together. —Craig, father at PS 198

From teachers and principals:

- Create a family band. If you have instruments, use them. If not, bang on pots for drums, blow into bottles for horns, fill empty cans with rice for shakers, and sing! —Craig, father at PS 198

- Bake together. If you’re creating a dish that has historical perspective, you can talk about that. Serving and plating food, making a beautiful presentation, can be art.

- Polishing nails is art. Paint them together!

- Clean or redecorate your room and think about “How can we make this less cluttered and more artistic?”

From kids:

- Make up your own dances—to reggaeton, merengue and salsa and hip hop. —Valeria, age 11

- Make action cartoons. Make up your own characters. Also, you can just tell stories to each other. —Ricky, age 12

- My sister draws pictures for me and I like to color them in. —Sara, age 11

Make art at home!
✔ **CAE Parent Voice**, an e-newsletter that helps parents connect with one another through shared stories and ideas about arts education at school and at home. Sign up for CAE's family page online at [www.cae-nyc.org/parent](http://www.cae-nyc.org/parent).

✔ **This Parents Guide**, translated into multiple languages, which you can download and print or email from our website.

**Ideas for improving arts in your school with:**

✔ **Parents as Arts Partners (PAAP)** is a program of CAE, open to every NYC public school. It also provides information on:

  - New York State learning standards in the arts
  - New York City's *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning* for each grade in dance, visual art, music and theater
  - The steps for finding a cultural partner (arts teacher) for your school

**VISIT WWW.CAE-NYC.ORG for ideas on arts activities and MORE!**

✔ Visit our Resources page to learn about family-friendly arts activities in all 5 boroughs throughout the year.

You can also find information on our website about:

- Other arts grants
- Classroom best practices
- News about the arts in NYC schools
- Links to other arts education resources
- Publications for parents

**TERMS YOU SHOULD KNOW**

**Arts-in-Education**: The field of arts education in the schools, including: arts education during school and after; partnerships between schools and cultural organizations; visiting artists; artist residencies; in-school performances by performing artists; arts workshops for educators; field trips to museums and performing arts events; school-wide arts celebrations.

**Cultural Partners**: Cultural organizations that partner with schools to provide arts education services.

**CEP**: Comprehensive Educational Plan. The annual statement of educational philosophy and approach prepared by every public school for the DOE.

**DOE**: Department of Education. The governing body of the NYC public school system.

**Office of Family Engagement and Advocacy**: Office within the DOE that engages public school parents and families, and represents parent views in decision-making at the highest levels of the DOE.

**Parent Coordinator**: Paid staff position at some NYC public schools; coordinates parent activities and responds to parent concerns.

**PA and PTA**: Parent Association and Parent Teacher Association. These are parent leadership groups open to all parents and required in every public school. Good places for parents to find out what’s happening at their school.

**SLT**: School Leadership Team, made up of teachers, principals and parents that makes decisions about school priorities, how the budget is spent, and evaluates a school’s progress.

**TA**: Teaching Artist. Professional artist and educator, often working through a cultural organization, who comes into schools to teach art on a visiting basis.

**UFT**: United Federation of Teachers. This union represents NYC public school teachers. A frequent collaborator with parents on issues such as special education and educational equity, the UFT also provides publications and resources to increase parent involvement in schools.

---

Writer: Cris Beam  
Designer: Kathie Rokita, Blue Sky Design, Inc.  
Photographers: Kit Kittle, Nan Melville, CAE Archives