



RESEARCH REPORT

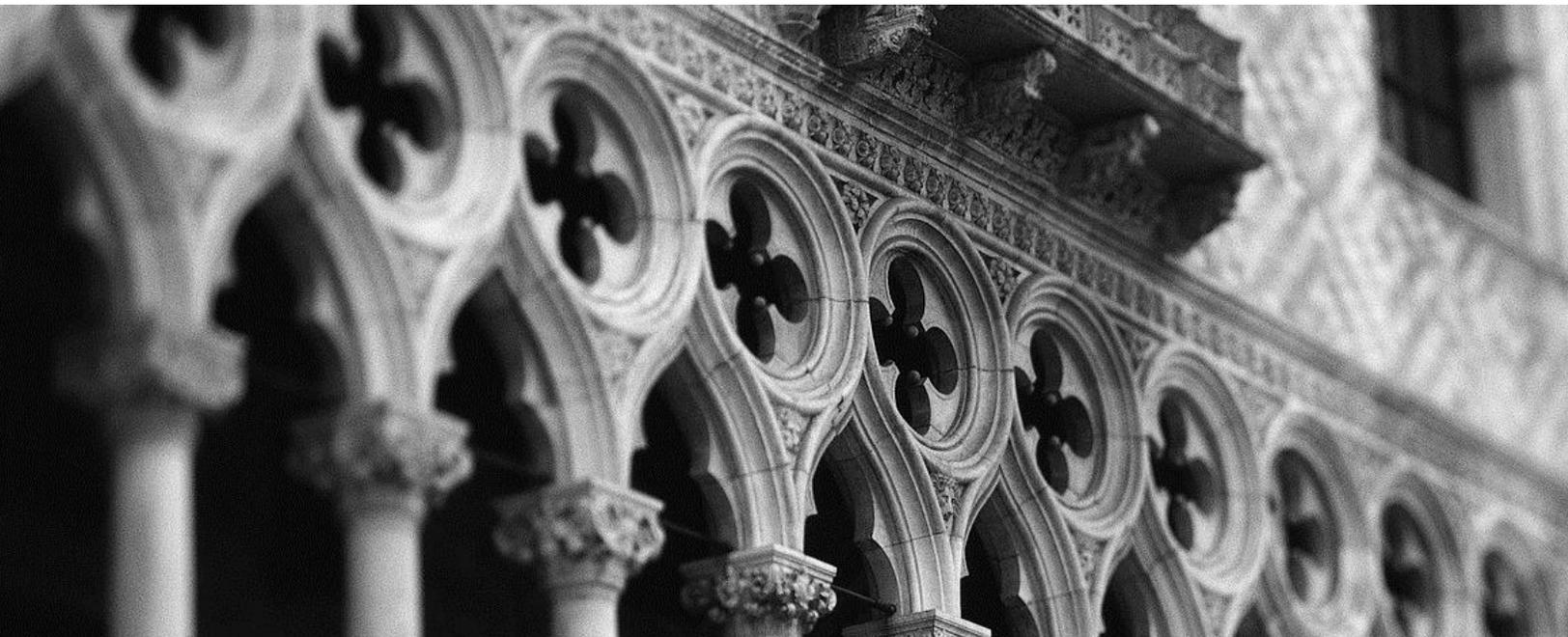
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Seattle Arts Stakeholder Engagement Report

A RESEARCH REVIEW

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Executive Summary

The Seattle K-12 Arts Learning Collaborative initiated a community and youth needs assessment that endeavors to capture the perspectives and desires of community members and youth with respect to the development of a comprehensive, sequential arts education for all students in the district. Seattle Public Schools and The BERC Group partnered to disseminate surveys and to conduct focus groups to provide community members an opportunity to share their perspectives.

Seattle Public Schools authored and disseminated a brief survey to better understand the perspectives of the Seattle community. This survey asked respondents which of the four primary arts disciplines (Dance, Music, Theater, Visual Arts) community members would prioritize for a comprehensive, sequential arts education for all students in the district. A total of 1294 surveys were collected. Survey results suggest respondents, in general, agree Music and Visual Arts should be the priority for a district-wide, comprehensive, and sequential arts education initiative. Results were disaggregated by respondent type. All respondent groups chose either Music or Visual Arts as their first or second choice, with one respondent group exception (Education Admin). When respondent choices are combined, Music and Visual Arts account for 76% of all responses.

Four community focus groups were conducted within Seattle Public Schools. Additionally, student-specific focus groups were conducted at four different high schools within the district. Community and student focus group participants were asked to discuss their perceptions/experiences with arts education in Seattle Public Schools, their hopes for future arts education, their ideal experience with each discipline (Dance, Music, Theater, Visual Arts), what they perceive as the biggest barriers to creating a comprehensive arts plan, and what characteristic students should have upon graduating from Seattle Public Schools. Community and student focus groups were held separately. Focus group data was grouped by focus group type (community or student), then analyzed and quantified thematically.

Community focus group participants perceive Seattle Public Schools arts education as unequal and inconsistent across the district. Many believe there is significant variation in the quality and quantity of programs between north and south ends. This inequality is further exacerbated by PTA funds that are more plentiful in the north than in the south. Disciplines and programs offered vary widely from school to school, and there is no evidence of a sequential curriculum that sets students up for long range success. Respondents used terms such as “sporadic,” “haphazard,” and “unpredictable,” when describing program access. Participants believe that arts programs deserve greater priority and respect, and should not be marginalized by a “core-focused” and “test-centric” system. Arts should be an integral part of a holistic approach to educate students.

Student focus group respondents described having increasingly limited exposure to arts education as they progress through school. In elementary school, students had more art in their day, and it was integrated into different content areas. Once they moved on to middle school and then high school, exposure to arts education diminished, and students were forced to choose one discipline over another. Students also remarked about the inconsistency of arts instruction. Certain disciplines had full time instructors, while other had only generalists.

Community focus group respondents would like to see arts play a larger role in the education experience of Seattle Public Schools students. Arts should be integrated into different subject areas.

Respondents believe that arts education builds creative and critical thinking skills, and thus should be used by teachers as a part of their instructional approach regardless of content area. Respondents would also like to see consistent access to arts education in all schools across the district. This access should start early. In short, all students should have access to quality arts education at the elementary school level regardless of the school they attend. To provide quality programs and equal access, community partnerships, arts instructors, and teacher training are required. Some respondents would like to see a full time arts instructor at each school to coordinate community partnerships, to train teachers, and to help develop arts integrated curricula for different content areas.

Student participants described their experience as arts-limited, and thus would like to see access to and offerings of arts programs improved. They would like access to the disciplines their school is missing, more time to take arts classes, and opportunities to advance. Students also want to showcase their work. The lack of opportunity to present work and celebrate effort, according to these students, is indicative of school culture. Students need more art career guidance. Many want to pursue careers in arts and are unaware of mentor and internship opportunities. They need help getting started.

Ideal arts education by discipline starts with curriculum updates, according to community focus group participants. Arts curricula need to be updated to be multi-cultural, representative, relevant to students, broader in scope, and integrated with other content areas. If integrated well, participants believe arts disciplines can improve engagement and ensure course content is applicable to the lives of their students. All students should have exposure to each discipline at the elementary school level. Programs that focus on a specific discipline should be sequential from elementary school through high school. To ensure appropriate curriculum, ongoing teacher training, mentorship/internship opportunities for students, and ties to professional arts organizations should be procured and or strengthened.

Students want exposure and access to all four disciplines. The exposure they seek is early, broad, and guided by professional arts instructors. Students want early exposure to develop interest and a foundation in the discipline(s) they choose to pursue down the road.

Many community respondents believe the contemporary cultural climate is a major barrier for any comprehensive arts initiative. Specifically, respondents believe that arts, overall, is undervalued, underappreciated, and perceived as an educational “extra.” This climate is reflected by an overall lack of leadership, funding, and budget allocation that support the arts. What is more, many believe there is little evidence of a top-down, consistent, and long range arts vision.

Students agree that arts education is not properly prioritized. On the ground, they experience inconsistent and repetitive instruction, and are taught by teachers spread thinly, play aging instruments, and witness discipline inequity. According to students, programs are simply not a priority, and thus receive little funding or support. The exceptions are highly successful and elite programs that garner community-wide attention and external support.

Community members believe Seattle Public Schools graduates should have strong thinking skills that will help them succeed in life and in career. Critical, creative, flexible, and independent thinking skills were frequently identified as imperatives for student success beyond graduation. Respondents believe arts play a vital role in developing these skills. Participants believe that students should have exposure to and respect for cultural differences. Arts should provide a varied and positive lens with which students view different ways of expressing and emoting. Finally, many want students to be confident, compassionate, and empathetic community members who pursue career and life with passion and curiosity. The students themselves want to be self-motivated, self-sufficient, and independent. They want to leave high school motivated to pursue their passions and career goals. To do this, they need to be “prepared” and college-ready.

All focus group participants were asked to fill out a survey at the end of group sessions. Surveys focused on access/offering of arts classes, the importance of arts education to student skills, achievement and advancement, and whether or not the quantity and quality of arts education in Seattle Public Schools is satisfactory. A total of 228 surveys were submitted by focus group participants.

Over 90% of respondents surveyed believe that all students should have access to arts education, that arts education is essential to learning, that arts should be included as a core subject, and that arts fosters positive behavior and skills that prepare students for college, career, and citizenship. Eight-six percent of respondents believe that arts education positively impacts the development of self-management, collaborative, social, and critical thinking skills. Ninety-four percent of respondents believe arts education builds confidence.

Seventy-eight percent of respondents, or greater, believe that arts education improves or increases overall quality of life, test scores, academic achievement, probability of high school graduation, and probability of attending college. Ninety-four percent believe that arts education increases students’ understanding of a multicultural society.

The survey also asked participants to rate the importance of having each arts discipline instructed by an arts certified specialist. Ninety-five percent of respondents believe it is important/very important to have arts certified specialists teaching Music and Visual arts. For Dance and Theatre, 80% and 92% of respondents, respectively, believe arts certified specialists teaching these disciplines are important/very important.

Lastly, the survey asked participants whether or not they are satisfied with the quantity and quality of arts education in Seattle public schools. Ninety-two percent of all respondents are currently not satisfied with the quantity of arts education. Additionally, over 75% of respondents are not satisfied with the quality of what is offered.

The qualitative and quantitative data that inform this report highlight the diversity of perceptions, experiences, opinions, and beliefs about arts education in Seattle Public Schools. Despite this diversity, respondents, by in large, agree that arts education should be prioritized by the district. Additionally, all students, regardless of school, should have early and equal access to quality arts education.

Seattle Arts Stakeholder Engagement Report

INTRODUCTION

The Seattle K-12 Arts Learning Collaborative is developing a multi-year K-12 Arts Plan. To this end, Seattle Public Schools (SPS) contracted with The BERC Group, Inc. to conduct research to assist in the development of the plan. This report summarizes findings from a Community and Youth Needs Assessment. The intent of this report is to narrow the focus of the Arts Plan to two arts disciplines and to contextualize community members and students' vision for arts education and the current barriers.

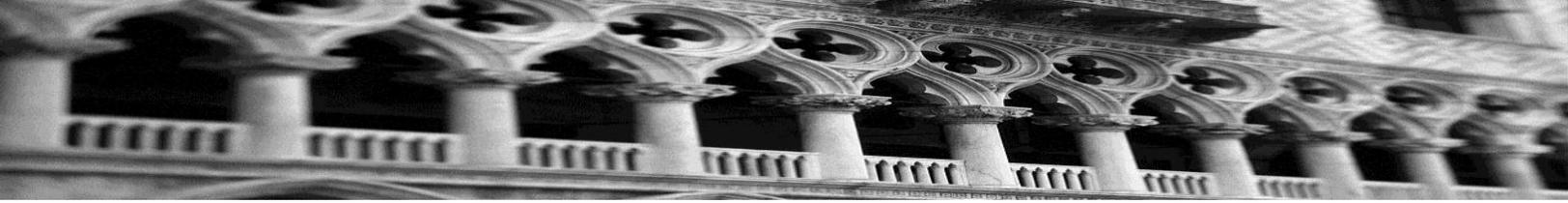
We have compiled the data findings into the report to be used for the Art Plan development. The report begins with brief description of the methods, followed by a summary of findings, SPS survey results, community focus group analysis, student focus group analysis, and lastly, focus group survey response analysis.

METHODS

The stakeholder engagement assessment utilized a multiple measures, mixed methodology approach. The collection of both quantitative and qualitative data adds scope and breadth to the study in addition to providing the ability to triangulate findings. This report encompasses four sources of data.

1. A Seattle Public Schools authored and disseminated survey that asked respondents to prioritize which of the four primary arts disciplines (Dance, Music, Theater, and Visual Arts) should have a comprehensive, sequential arts education for all students in the district.
2. Community focus groups held at four locations (Ballard, Garfield, Chief Sealth, South Shore K-8) in Seattle Public Schools.
3. Five student focus groups held at four locations (Seattle World School, Rainier Beach, Chief Sealth, and NOVA high schools), with students from multiple schools attending the Seattle World School focus group.
4. A survey disseminated at each focus group location.

Focus group data is the most content rich data source, and thus is the primary focus of the report. Both surveys provide additional data and lend support to the focus group sessions. A copy of each survey can be found in the appendix. Focus group participants were asked five questions (see Questions below). Responses to each question are quantified and outlined thematically (for both community and student focus groups).



The Focus Group Questions:

1. Please describe your perceptions of students' current experiences with the Arts in Seattle Public Schools.
2. Now more broadly, please describe your wishes and hopes for Arts Education in Seattle Public Schools in the future.
3. We want to better understand student's ideal educational experiences in Arts Education in specific disciplines. Think about what you wish were included in each discipline such as styles, mediums, cultures/traditions, history, technology, how the arts can apply to careers, and so on.
 - a. Please describe your vision for Dance Education
 - b. Please describe your vision for Music Education
 - c. Please describe your vision for Theatre Arts
 - d. Please describe your vision for Visual Arts
4. What do you perceive as the greatest barriers currently facing Seattle Public Schools in creating a Comprehensive K – 12 Arts Plan?
5. Generally speaking, what do you think should be the characteristics of a Seattle Public School student upon graduation from high school? (e.g., knowledge, skills, qualities)

SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS SURVEY

Seattle Public Schools authored and disseminated a brief survey to better understand the perspectives of the Seattle community. This survey was disseminated online. Specifically, SPS wanted to know which of the four primary arts disciplines (Dance, Music, Theater, Visual Arts) community members would prioritize for a comprehensive, sequential arts education for all students in the district. Respondents were asked to choose a first and second choice. Additionally, respondents were asked to identify their role or interest in arts education. A total of 1294 surveys were collected, and Figure 1 shows the respondent type.

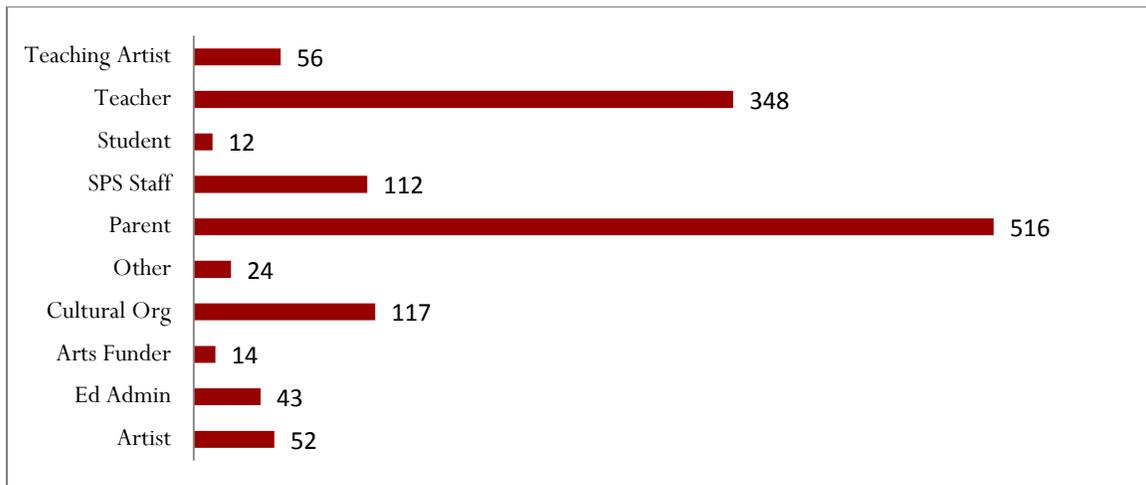


Figure 1. Survey Respondent Type

The results of this brief survey show clearly that community members, by-in-large, prioritize Music and Visual Arts for a comprehensive, sequential arts education for all students in the district. Forty-six percent of respondents chose Music and 39% chose Visual Arts as their first choices (see Figure 2). This represents 82% of responses. For second choice, Music and Visual Arts were chosen by 35% and 34% of respondents, respectively. This accounts for 69% of responses. When choices are combined, Music and Visual Arts account for 40% and 36% of responses, respectively (or 76% of all responses). Dance and Theatre account for 8% and 16%, respectively.

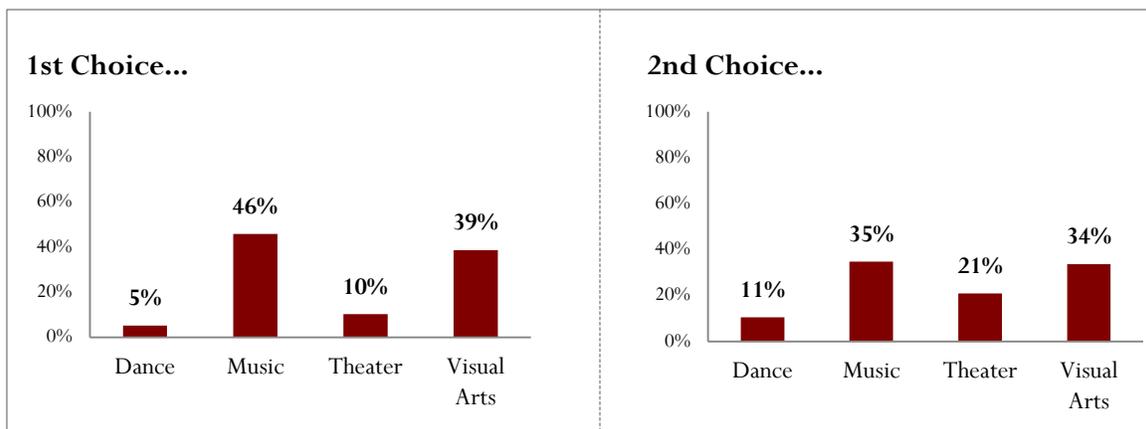


Figure 2. First and Second Choice of Discipline



Figure 3 shows the responses disaggregated by respondent type. Across all respondent types, there is agreement that Music and Visual Arts are the disciplines of top priority. The respondent categories of Arts Education Funder, Cultural Organization, Other, Parent, SPS Staff, Teacher, and Teaching Artist all chose Music as their first priority. Respondent types of Artist, Education Admin, and Student chose visual arts as their top priority.

This general agreement of priority (Music and Visual Arts) was consistent with “second choice” responses with one exception (see Figure 4). The Education Admin respondent category, for second choice, chose Music and Theatre. In all other categories, however, respondents chose either Music or Visual Arts.

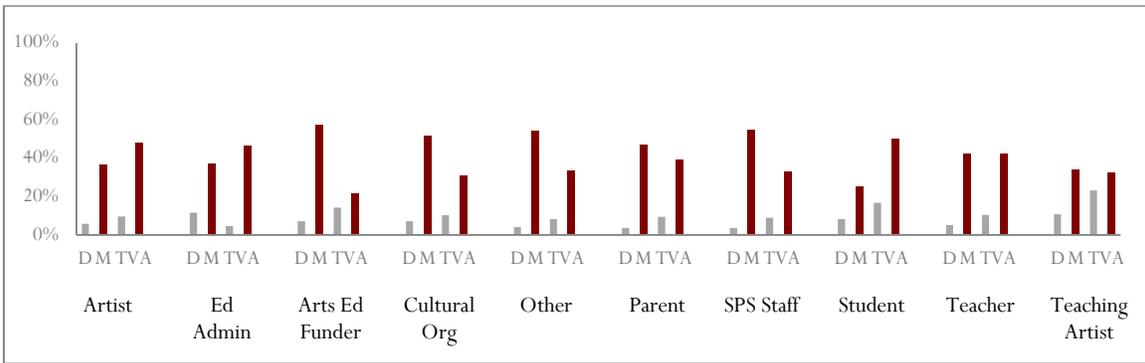


Figure 3. First Choice of Discipline by Respondent Type

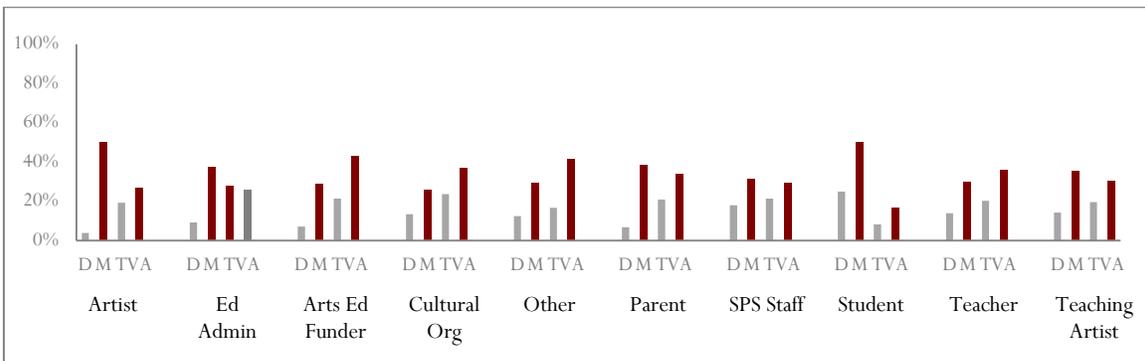


Figure 4. Second Choice of Discipline by Respondent Type

COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS

Community focus groups were conducted at four locations within Seattle Public Schools during the stakeholder engagement/city-wide planning workshops hosted by the Mayor’s Office and Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs. Researchers trained facilitators to conduct the focus groups, and a note-taker transcribed the findings. The meetings were held at Ballard High School, Garfield High School, Chief Sealth High School, and South Shore K-8. Focus group respondents self-identified (via survey) as one or more the following: Family member (of student), Seattle Public School staff member, community member-at-large, community arts organization/teaching arts, and student. Researchers estimate approximately 275 people attended focus groups.

Analysis for each focus group question is below. Researchers broke down discussions by concept, grouped thematically, and then quantified. The most frequently discussed themes are the basis of the analysis. Each question includes a supporting frequency chart that outlines the primary and supporting themes. Please note, each graph has primary theme data points (frequency bars in red) and subtheme data points (frequency bars in gray). Primary theme data points are the *sum* of supporting theme data points.

Community Focus Group Topic #1: Describe your Perceptions of Students’ Current Experiences with the Arts in Seattle Public Schools

Focus group participants were asked to “describe your perceptions of students’ current experiences with the arts in Seattle Public Schools.” Respondents discussed a multitude of concepts under Topic #1; however, five themes were articulated and revisited often. These primary themes accounted for 83% of all concepts discussed under Topic #1. These themes break out into supporting subthemes (see Figure 5 for theme and subtheme frequency). Primary themes are red and subthemes are gray. Subtheme frequency rolls up to primary theme total.

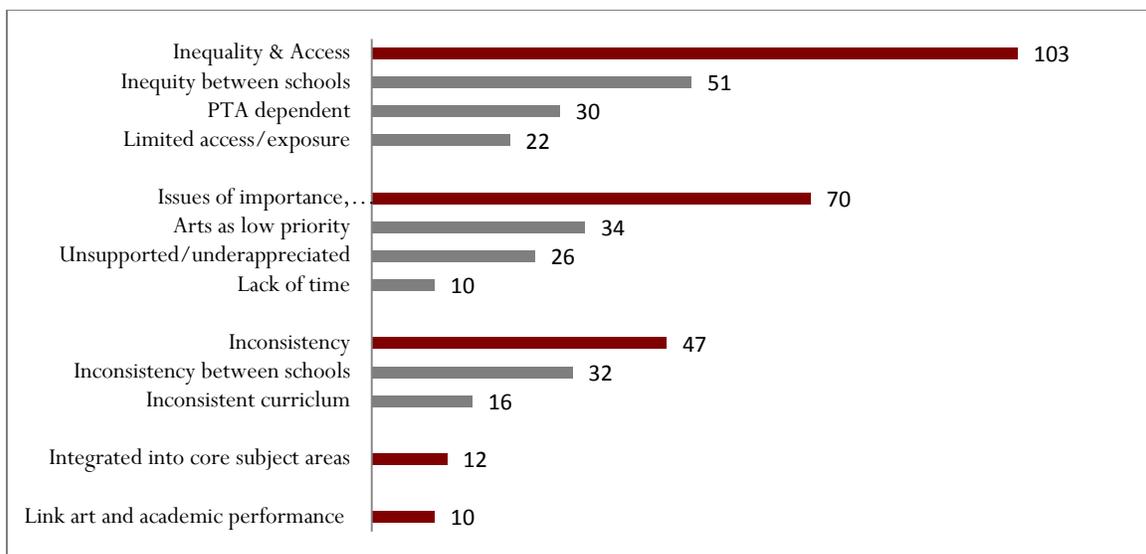


Figure 5. Perceptions of Current School Arts Experiences



As evidenced by the frequency graph above, inequity and access to programs was a central concern. Regardless of focus group location, “Inequity & Access” was the most commonly discussed concept (see Figure 5). The frequency of this response was higher as a percent of total responses for lower socioeconomic areas. Many respondents did not believe some schools have access to arts programs and funding that other schools have, specifically those in the north end. One respondent asserted, “I have a child in Sealth with no theatre department. We have to bring people in outside of the school to have a theatre program.” Respondents discussed the positive role the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) plays in funding programs not supplied by the district, but recognized that PTA dependence only served to exacerbate the inequity across the district. A respondent stated, “[There is] a great unevenness in terms of what PTAs can bring to the schools, especially with schools between North and South Seattle. Parents have less money in the South to be able to put into the PTA and the arts.” Respondents also reported Title 1 and low performing schools and students had reduced program access due to increased school time and content focused on core content areas.

Differential access to and funding of programs is closely tied to the “Inconsistency” theme. Many respondents felt that program access was haphazard, sporadic, and unpredictable. Each school has a unique mix of programs that are specific to discipline - some schools cover all disciplines, some only two, and some none. One respondent stated, “All art disciplines are not represented—art but no theatre, or dance and no art, etc. Schools seem to have one or the other. [There is] significant variation in equity, especially north versus south end.” Furthermore, “If you’ve got 10 different kids from 10 different schools, their experience would be vastly different.” According to some respondents, there are curriculum inconsistencies within a school and little evidence of a sequential curriculum that sets students up for long range engagement and ultimately success. This general feeling of inconsistency is further buttressed by different discipline and program offerings at each school level (elementary, middle, high school).

Respondents discussed frequently the importance of arts education in schools. Most agreed that art disciplines and programs deserve greater priority and time in schools. Art education, both programs and time, are continually marginalized by an underfunded and “test-centric system” that focuses attention on core subjects that can be easily measured against district and state standards. This concern represents approximately 25% of the concepts cover under Topic #1. If arts education, according to some participants, is to play a larger role in schools, it will need to be supported by leadership and administrators. Additionally, a culture shift is required that recognizes arts as an essential component to the development of the total students. To achieve this, some respondents would like to see how academic performance and art class enrollment correlate. They believe that art courses influence academic success, and if measured properly, could initiate that culture shift mentioned above. There is a common perception that “test scores of the schools play into whether they have arts. If a school’s scores are too low, they won't pay for arts.”

Lastly, a few respondents believe that arts education can be better integrated with other subject areas, namely core classes. One respondent stated, “It would be great if there was a way to tie it all together. It would solidify the importance of art, show how art ties into math, geography; tie art into science. If you are a visual learner, you can see things you might not pick out for example in science/geology.” Participants believe integration would increase the role that arts play in content areas, and if facilitated by proper teacher training, could increase content relevance, opportunities

to integrate multiple subject areas, and student engagement. Additionally, integration of arts concepts within core subject areas will encourage creative and flexible thinking, collaboration, and application.

Community Focus Group Topic #2: Describe Your Wishes and Hopes for Arts Education in Seattle Public Schools in the Future

Focus group participants were asked to “describe your wishes and hopes for Arts Education in Seattle Public Schools in the future.” Topic #2 covered many areas and while the number of primary themes (seven) is high, they link logically to create a fairly concise view of what participants believe to be important. These primary themes accounted for 88% of all concepts discussed under Topic #2. These themes break out into subthemes (see Figure 6 for theme and subtheme frequency). Primary themes are red and subthemes are gray. Subtheme frequency rolls up to primary theme total.

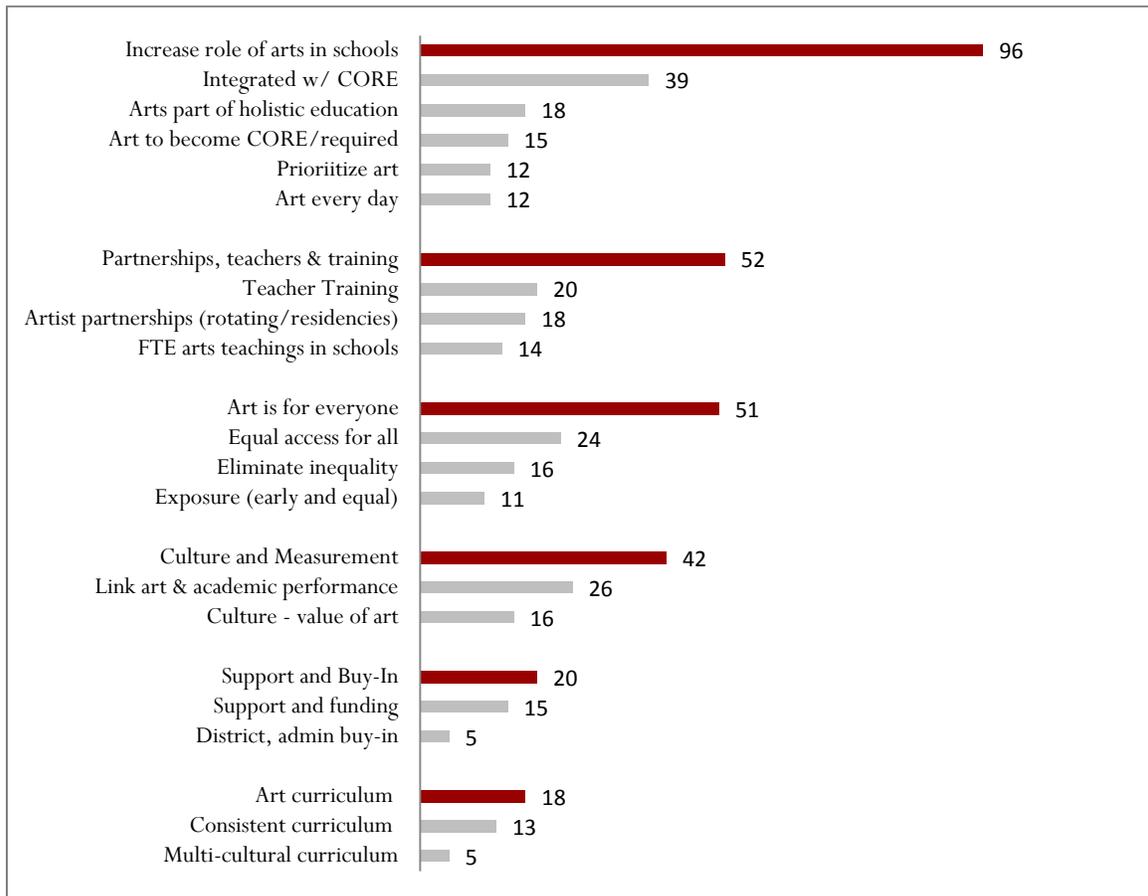


Figure 6. Wishes and Hopes for Arts Education

Almost 30% of the concepts were specific to increasing the role of arts in schools. Firstly, many participants believe that arts should be integrated into core subject areas. According to respondents, art is highly relevant to core subjects, builds creative thinking skills, improves engagement and application, and thus should be used by teachers as a part of their instructional



approach. As stated by one participant, “Art is a great medium to teach other topics. It is a great medium as a common thread. It is a way to get a knowledge base across to [students with] multiple styles of learning.” As an essential part of a holistic education, arts should be prioritized, (some think required) and a part of every school day. One participant stated, “The arts are a universal language and should be an integral part of their education – I don’t understand why it’s not required.” A few participants believe the arts should be added to the core curriculum.

Fifteen percent of the concepts discussed focused on access, equality, and exposure. Participants see that arts programs and offerings are unequal across the district and believe that there should be equal and consistent access for all students regardless of location. One participant shared, “No one should be excluded. The school system is academic focused, we need artists, we need people to think differently, the world needs it.” Participants believed access for all students should start early (elementary school) and should be a part of every student’s day.

Focused and consistent arts programs in all schools will require partnerships, arts instructors, and teacher training, with approximately 16% of concepts centering on these themes. Some want to see FTE (full-time equivalency) positions in every school dedicated to certified arts instructors. One respondent asserted, “All schools should have a full time art teacher of some kind. Regular teachers should get training and incorporate arts into the curriculum.” What is more, “If you have a dedicated teacher, they know how to teach, they know what is appropriate to teach, they have an art background. If you have a program in place, you can build on things. They know what is done in first grade, second grade, to build on skills.” Others discussed partnerships that could supply schools with rotating artists and or artist residency programs. Artists inside of the schools can provide services beyond just arts programs, such as training and curriculum development that can help teachers incorporate arts into core subject areas.

To sustain arts, the district and top level administration at individual schools will need to support arts initiatives, according to some participants. One participant stated, “The school district needs to advocate harder for arts in the schools;” while another lamented, “A lot of principals don’t even know what arts are provided in their school – not a lot of emphasis on principals and leaders to support arts.” Participants agreed they will need funding for programs, training, and partnerships. Additionally, some respondents think there needs to be a culture shift about the importance of arts in schools. Arts need to be valued equally with athletics and academics. “[We need a] change of attitude- that art has to be part of the whole education. What is it that the arts teach? We need to be able to verbalize the skills students learn in the arts that translate to other disciplines of life,” shared a respondent. To initiate this culture shift, some believe that arts and academic performance need to be linked. Once measurable, some respondents think that buy-in at federal, state, and district level will increase.

According to some, the district would be better off with a comprehensive system that encouraged communication, coordination, and collaboration with schools, community organizations and teaching artists. This would allow schools to identify, share, and implement best practices. Additionally, coordinating external vendors would be streamlined and resources used more effectively and judiciously.

Community Focus Group Topic #3: Identify the ideal education experience for students for each discipline (Dance, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts)

Focus group participants were asked to “**identify the ideal education experience for students for each discipline (Dance, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts).**” Four consistent themes emerged from discussions about each discipline. These themes (see Figure 7) accounted for over 70% of concepts discussed with respect to each discipline. The tables below highlight the frequency of these themes both aggregated (Figure 7) and by discipline (Figures 8a, b, c, d).

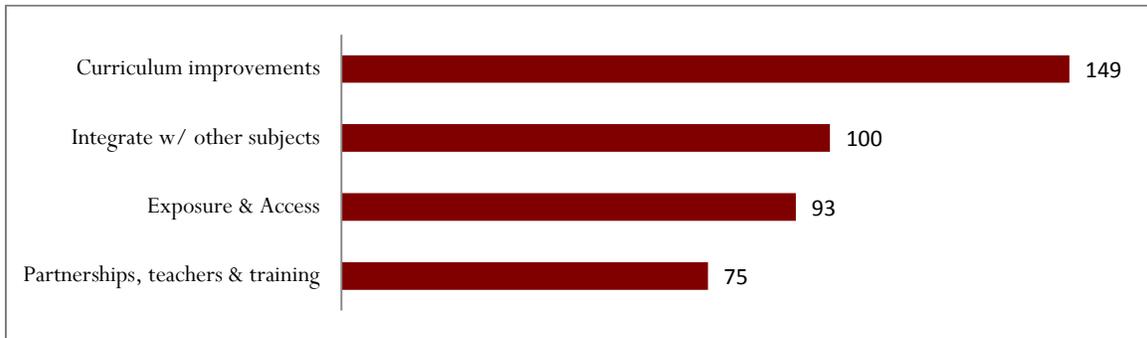


Figure 7. Ideal Experience by Discipline, Aggregated

Aggregated Results (Topic #3)

Participants discussed curriculum improvements most frequently for Dance, Music, and Visual Arts disciplines. On an aggregated level, respondents believe that arts curricula in Seattle Public Schools need to be updated to be multi-cultural, representative, relevant to students, and broader in scope. Many respondents believe that arts education needs to be integrated with other content areas, specifically core subjects. According to participants, the skills arts education develops are highly relevant to core subject areas, helps build thinking and learning skills, and can boost engagement. Thus, it can become a tool that teachers utilize to improve engagement and ensure course content is applicable to the lives of their students. Participants also discussed exposure and access frequently as outlined in topics one and two above. Focus group participants want to see arts exposure at the elementary school level. Early exposure should be accessible by all students and it should be sequential from elementary school through high school, with students having access to the arts during the regularly schedule school day. Many respondents would like to see productive partnerships with arts community organizations and professional artists, as well. These partnerships can provide teacher training and curriculum development to help with integrating arts and core subject areas and mentorship opportunities for students.

There was variation for each discipline. While the primary themes were consistent across disciplines, the supporting concepts varied. A Figure showing the frequency of responses, and variation within each discipline is discussed.



Dance

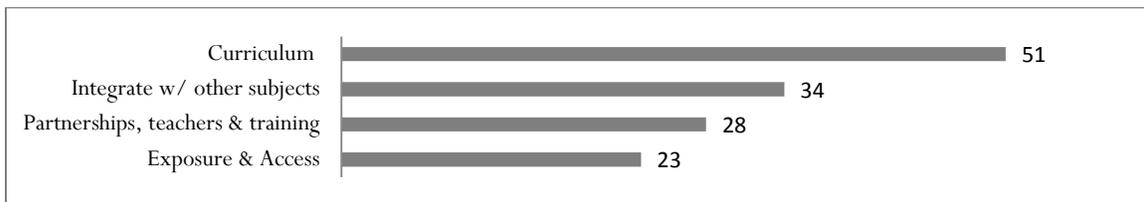


Figure 8a. Dance

Concept frequency with respect to “Dance” is highlighted in Figure 8a. When discussing Dance, respondents most frequently spoke of a need for a multi-cultural curriculum that is representative of the area (Puget Sound), and that takes advantage of local diversity. As one participant put it, “Looking at the culture of each classroom, highlighting the cultures of students builds their self esteem, and raises students’ respect for each other and each other’s history.” Some believe that dance should be a part of every school day, should take multiple forms, and should be relevant to both genders. Additionally, it needs to be inclusive and supportive. One participant said, “I think kids need to be exposed to a variety of dance forms. You have to learn African dance, jazz, musical theater dance, tribal dances, not just ballet. I think what happens as kids get older, they have this idea that dance is supposed to look like this, and mine doesn’t look like this. My painting doesn’t look like that so it isn’t valid. The creative process is important, not just the outcome.”

For respondents that discussed integrating dance with other subject areas, most felt that dance naturally integrates with physical education classes. A participant shared, “[It] seems logical and relatively easy and beneficial to incorporate dance into the physical education program.” Aligning these content areas would ensure that all kids have exposure to dance. Physical education teachers can be trained by dance instructors/professionals to develop an integrated, multi-cultural, and student centered curriculum. Partnerships with dance professionals and organizations can provide mentorship opportunities for students and curriculum guidance for teachers. Lastly, some respondents believe that all students should be exposed to Dance and the elementary school level.

Music

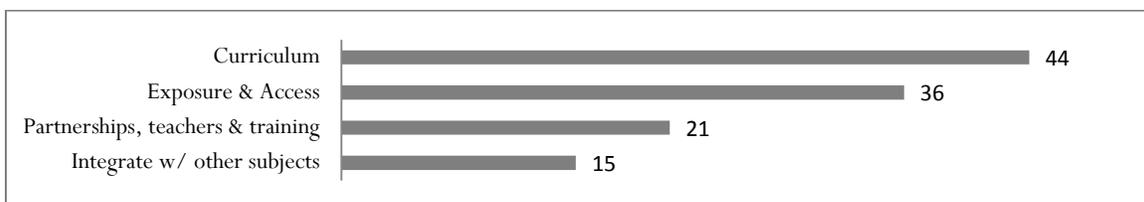


Figure 8b. Music

When discussing Music, the theme participants covered most frequently was curriculum improvements (see Figure 8b). The discussion centered around updating the curriculum to be multi-cultural, relevant, comprehensive, and student centered. Some believe these updates will increase engagement. As one person stated, “The youth are already doing music – they are doing it themselves and posting it on YouTube. Give the space at school to do the music the way that they

already do on their own. Let them play around with it on their own and have fun with it, and gradually introduce the discipline into their ‘play’.”

Some would like to see Music required in Seattle’s public schools. Similar to arts education overall, early exposure is a concern. Some believe that it is essential to expose students to music at the elementary school level and that all students should have the same access. One respondent asserted, “I’d like to see choral programs at every elementary school. Every child can be a part of it. I’d like every child to be able to read music once they leave elementary school. I’d like to see a more equitable system for instrumental music so that you don’t have to pay for instruments.”

Additionally, the exposure should be broader; students should take music classes during the school day and should have opportunities to access programs outside of school.

Connections to community organizations and professional musicians is essential according to some respondents. The connections provide mentorship and career guidance for students and can help develop integrated curricula and training for teachers. During a few focus groups, participants mentioned that music is an important element of a holistic education, reiterating Music education should be a part of every student’s life, every day.

Theatre

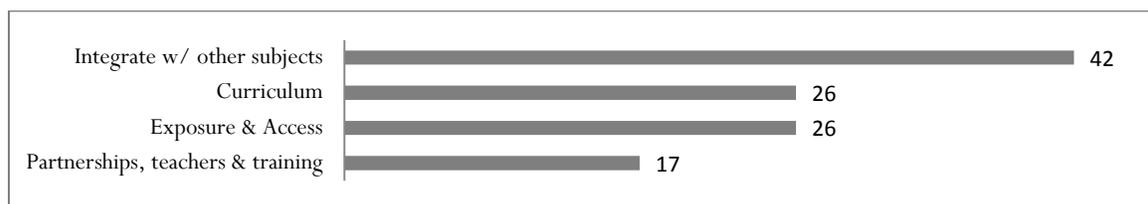


Figure 8c. Theatre

Discussions with respect to Theatre education centered most frequently on integration with other subject areas (see Figure 8c). “Theatre is a collaborative art that can easily incorporate other art forms and subject areas,” shared a respondent. These discussions focused on the life-skill development that theatre can provide. The skills developed via theatre participation are highly relevant to a students’ education regardless of subject area. According to participants, emoting, presenting, reciting, collaborating, and problem-solving are skills students practice in theatre, and each are applicable to all subject areas. Curriculum improvements, according to some discussions, should continue to focus on, and develop, life skills. Similar to other disciplines, respondents would like students to be exposed to Theatre at the elementary school level.



Visual Arts

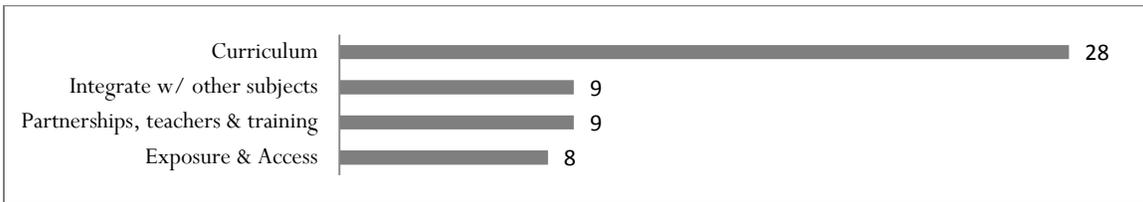


Figure 8d. Visual Arts

Curriculum improvements were the center of discussions about the Visual Arts (see Figure 8d.). Many believe that the curriculum should be broadened and more relevant to students. The way to increase engagement is through relevance according to some respondents. The curriculum should be multi-cultural, representative of the area (Puget Sound), and multi-media. A few respondents mentioned that Visual Arts should be student centered and the curriculum should be driven by a student’s interest (photography, drawing, graffiti), rather than by what is offered. Community partnerships, similar to discussions about other disciplines, can provide mentorship and career guidance for students, and can help develop integrated curricula and training for teachers.

Community Focus Group Topic #4: What do you perceive as the greatest barriers currently facing Seattle Public Schools in creating a Comprehensive K – 12 Arts Plan?

Focus group participants were asked **“What do you perceive as the greatest barriers currently facing Seattle Public Schools in creating a Comprehensive K – 12 Arts Plan?”** Five major themes emerged from the discussion based on this question. These themes represent 76% of the concepts discussed under Topic #4. Most themes break out into subthemes (see Figure 9 for theme and subtheme frequency). Primary themes are red and subthemes are gray. Subtheme frequency rolls up to primary theme total.

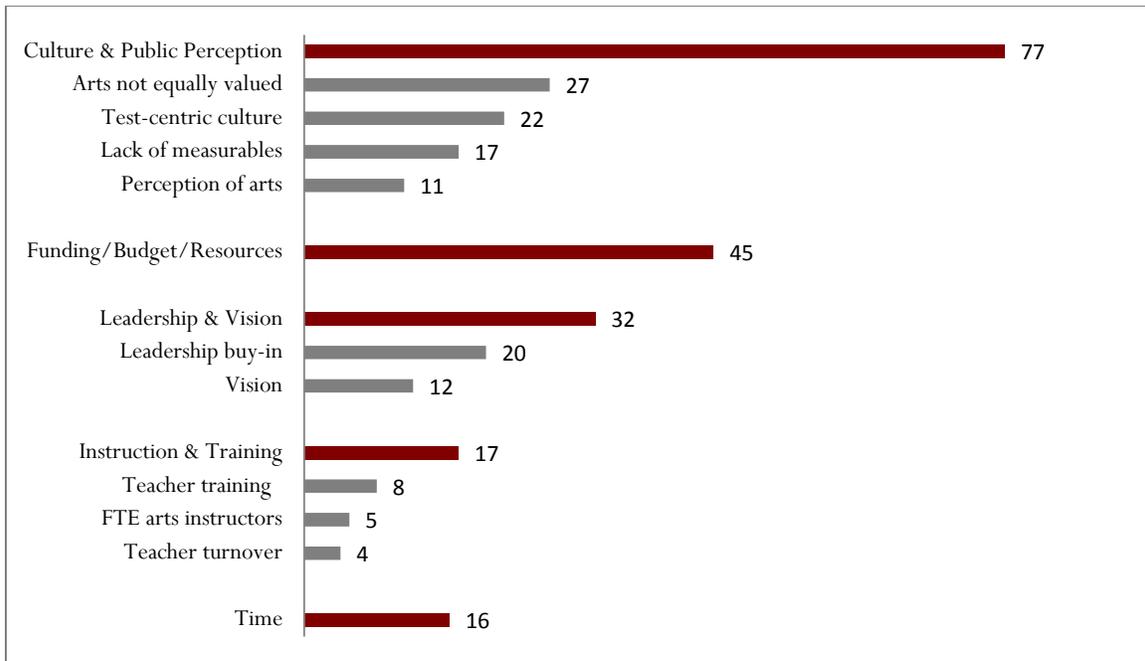


Figure 9. Perceived Barriers

Respondents identified many barriers currently confronting SPS. Over 30% of concepts covered were specific to issues of the contemporary cultural climate. As highlighted in Figure 9 respondents believe that arts education is not a valued component of education programs and that arts are regularly overlooked for subject areas that are easily measured such as math, science, history, and language arts. A respondent stated, “Art education is not seen as vital to a quality education. It is often treated as secondary (in scheduling and funding) to academics.” Furthermore, participants believe in the current “test-centric climate”, content areas beyond the reach of current standardized testing, as well as those that do not have developed measures, are marginalized or cut. Another participant stated, “Looking at low performing schools, they cut their arts and recess in order to increase the test scores. We’re going to graduate kids good at taking tests? The kids have to earn recess. What is that teaching them?” The focus on test scores, according to some respondents, encourages teachers to focus on testable content areas only, regularly at the demise of arts programs. “The way I see education is teaching to pass the test and not to love learning. Next year, deciding elective classes they were deciding between computer or drama. The teachers picked a computer class because the kids need to know about computers to pass the test,” explained a participant.

Eighteen percent of concepts discussed here focused on funding and budgets. Assertions about funding and budgets most commonly came in the form of one word responses, and thus are difficult to mine for insights. However, some respondents did outline why they believe funding is short and budgets are allocated unequally to arts programs. One person shared, “The easy answer is funding. We didn’t have money to pay teachers, but I think its people not recognizing that art is as valuable as math, reading etc.” Additionally, another shared while there are “budget constraints, [we are] undervaluing the role and experience of the arts. [There is an] erroneous focus on only testable and quantifiable education.” Participants believe arts should have greater value in our schools and can



productively integrate with core subject areas. One participant summarized, “Money is the number one barrier. Art is at the bottom. When the schools say they don't have money for science, etc., and so art gets bumped. Art connects with math, geometry, chemistry, everything. People don't realize the connections or importance.”

Another perceived barrier to a comprehensive arts plan is leadership and vision (13% of concepts). Some respondents believe, “It has to come from the top-down rather than the bottom-up, “ and thus, “A solution to the systemic problem is a policy that starts at the school board, that engages and ensures that the programs are promoted down.” Arts initiatives that are prioritized by the district will increase leadership buy-in at the school level. One respondent asserted that, “Principals in Seattle Public Schools are responsible for the budget of their own schools. A district-wide implementation program would be helpful so that arts education would be a priority in all schools.”

Seven percent of concepts discussed in Topic #4 were specific to instruction and training. Respondents recognize that with an arts initiative must come, “Ongoing – rigorous, sequential training for teachers.” As mentioned above, many respondents believe that arts education should be integrated with other subject areas. Professional artists can collaborate with teachers to develop curriculum and provide teacher training.

Lastly, approximately six percent of concepts were about time. Respondents recognized that teachers have many demands and little time to prepare. A respondent shared, “Kids are so excited when they have art day, but the teachers have a hard time being there for them because there is no time to prepare.” This speaks directly to the priority arts programs have in schools. Some believe, “Finding the time where arts can be folded into the school day,” is essential because, “[They] can support rather than displace the other disciplines.”

Community Focus Group Topic #5: What do you think should be the characteristics of a Seattle Public School student upon graduation from high school

Finally, focus group participants were asked what they “**think should be the characteristics of a Seattle Public School student upon graduation from high school.**” This topic was the most difficult to quantify and analyze due to the volume, breadth, and brevity of responses. Themes did emerge from the data and represent 61% of the concepts covered in discussions. Most themes break out into supporting subthemes (see Figure 10 for theme and subtheme frequency). Primary themes are red and subthemes are gray. Subtheme frequency rolls up to primary theme total.

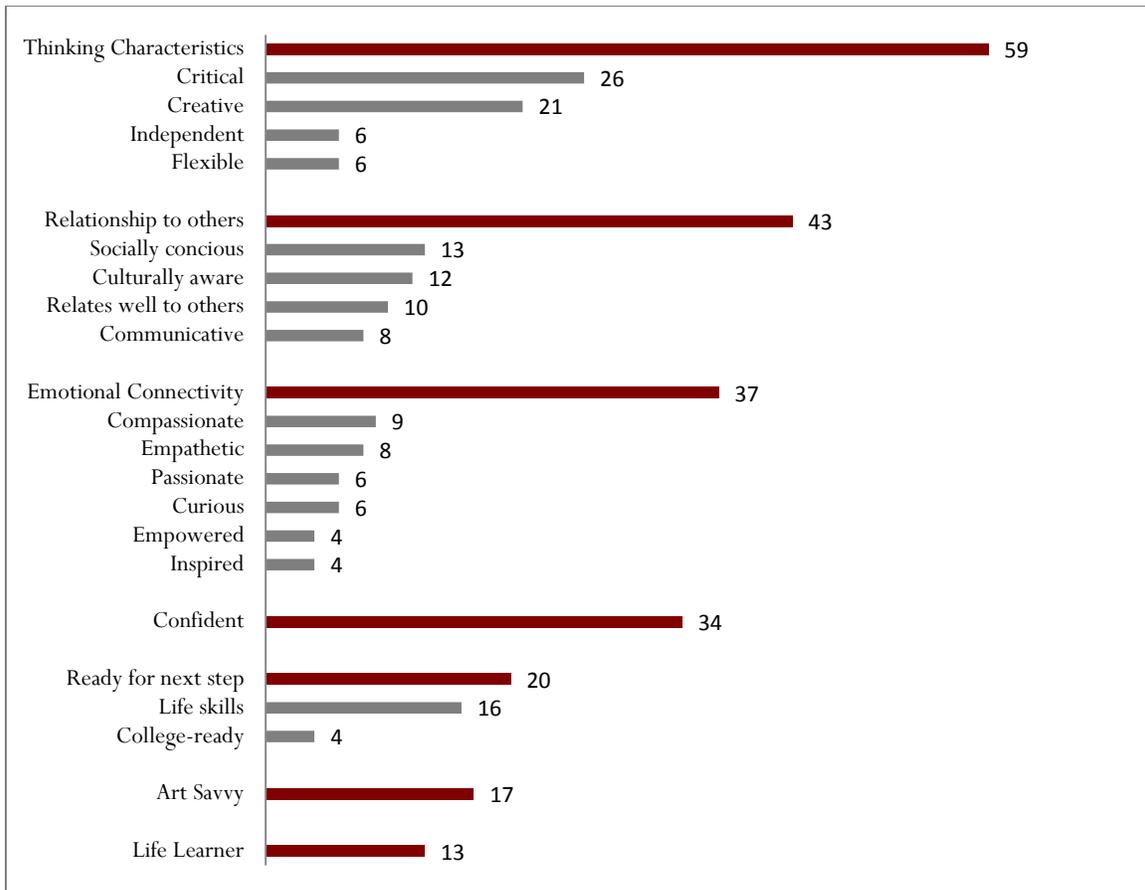


Figure 10. Desired characteristics of Seattle Public High School Graduate

Thinking characteristics were identified by participants often. Respondent believed that students emerging from high school need to know how to think in ways that allow them to successfully negotiate life beyond high school. Respondents want students to think critically, creatively, flexibly and independently. One participant spoke of the importance of critical thinking, stating that students should graduate, “Having well-developed critical thinking skills and the ability to identify the causes of a situation, to be able to identify solutions.” Another participant extended that idea, that students, “[Should be] critical thinkers. Someone who doesn’t have to draw inside the lines, knows more than one way to solve a problem, can solve a problem on their own. When given a question, they don’t have to ask someone else.” Another participant articulated the role arts can play in developing creative thinking skills: “The process of art making and creative thinking teaches people how to make decisions and problem solve.” Solving problems creatively was another theme. As one respondent put it, “I’d like to see our graduates, well-rounded, understand the connections between different disciplines—use knowledge from a variety of subjects/angles to solve a problem creatively – [with] the ability to connect different knowledge bases.”

Some respondents spoke about the role graduates can play in the community and how they must relate to a complex, multi-cultural, and collaborative world. They believe art can expose students to different cultures and perspectives. They would like students to have, “A deeper sense of cultural differences and respect for cultural differences. By continual arts education, you get used to people



having their different perspectives.” Similarly, “The arts teach how to be a part of the team, part of the broader collective, the bigger picture.” Respondents would also like to see socially conscious graduates ready to engage and contribute to their communities. For example, “I would like to see more kids that come out with a global perspective and are functioning engaging citizens. Students empowered to impact their community.”

A few respondents would like graduates to be arts savvy. They believe graduates should have a level of exposure to arts that encourages an appreciation of art and a basic level of understanding of all four disciplines. This idea was discussed by a few participants. These individuals would like students to, “Understand and experience all four arts disciplines. [And to be] open to art in their daily lives and as adults,” and to “Understand the wealth of arts in their community.” According to some, the exposure students receive is too limited. “I would hope that they would all have an appreciation for art. What I regret in the system is that they did not receive the education they needed to expand on the disciplines that they wanted to explore once they got older.”

As mentioned above, many respondents replied to this focus group question with one word and or very brief responses. Thus opportunities for analysis are limited. Some primary themes identified on Figure 10, for example, Emotional connectivity, Confident, Ready for next step, and Life learner themes, are simply quantified to demonstrate frequency, and thus importance. It is not a leap to glean from these frequencies outlined in Figure 10, that respondents hope student emerge from high school with confidence, life skills, a love of learning, and prepared for what is next on their personal journeys. Additionally, respondents hope these students are compassionate, empathetic, curious, passionate, empowered, and inspired.

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP

Five student focus groups were conducted at four locations. Chief Sealth hosted two sessions, and Rainier Beach, NOVA, and Seattle World School hosted one. The Seattle World School focus group was held on a Saturday, and included students from multiple schools. Average attendance was approximately 15 students per session. Researchers estimate about 40 students actively contributed to discussions. Thus, the total number of respondents and concepts discussed during these focus groups was significantly smaller than the community assessment focus groups. Students represented 10 schools across the district, with the vast majority attending high school. Only four students identified themselves as middle school students. Students identified a very wide range of themes, with minimal individual theme frequency, and are thus difficult to quantify. This section highlights topics that were consistent throughout all focus groups (community and student) and additional themes and statements that warrant mention despite low frequency.

Student Focus Group Topic #1: Describe your Experiences with the Arts in Seattle Public Schools

Students were asked to **“describe your experiences with the arts in Seattle Public Schools.”** Discussions yielded approximately 40 concepts from students. Students spoke primarily about access, exposure, disciplines offered, and arts education instruction.

Some students have had positive experiences throughout their schooling at Seattle Public Schools. These students felt that the options provided were adequate and accessible and that instruction was “good.” One student said, “It was easy to get into classes. I thought it was kind of easy. Not really much to it. Instruction was pretty good. We were guided well.”

Overall, however, students described having increasingly limited exposure to arts education as they progressed through school. In elementary school, students reported having more art in their day, and it was integrated throughout the day. For example, “At Lowell, we did a rotating arts programs in elementary school - art twice a week, music twice the next week. We had really good advanced visual arts. Music had a lot of variety. [Teachers] implemented art in classrooms like a map of the Nile out of dough.” According to students, the level of integration and exposure to arts education diminished in middle and high school. The number of offerings reduced, and students then had to choose one discipline over another. One student described his experience, “Elementary school- art is more accessible, however, sometimes limited. Middle School- no art, only band. High School- you really do have to choose between arts.”

At the high school level, some disciplines overshadow or replace other disciplines. Students reported the inequity within their schools. One student stated, “In high school, I'm the drum major of the marching band, but the marching band does not get funding. We're second class to the jazz band and orchestra. We just now got band uniforms. [It is] difficult that we do not have money.”

Lastly, students discussed arts education instruction. Most felt that good instruction was limited. Teachers were generalists, and in many cases, professional art instructors were absent. “In my elementary school, they made it so the classroom teacher has to teach art rather than have an expert teach art. Teachers do not have enough time in their schedule to spend enough time on it.” Other students asserted that their classes were repetitive and not contemporary or relevant to their lives.



“We are used to doing the same thing year after year. We make murals every year, the same projects.”

Student Focus Group Topic #2: Describe Your Wishes and Hopes for Arts Education in Seattle Public Schools in the Future

Students were asked to **“describe your wishes and hopes for Arts Education in Seattle Public Schools in the future.”** As mentioned in the last section, students described their high school experience as arts limited. They did not have access to all disciplines, and they did not have time to take more arts classes. During discussions about their hopes for future arts education, they asserted that they want these areas improved, specifically, access to the disciplines they do not have access to, more time to take interesting classes, and opportunities to advance. One student asserted, “I hope all students have access to the arts (all forms) at all grade levels;” while another hoped, “To be able to participate in advanced programs, despite age and grade.”

Some students would like opportunities to showcase their work. Currently, there are limited opportunities to present art work outside of the classroom or along the hallway walls. According to students, there is no energy put towards increasing the profile of arts or celebrating the students that do art. They believe art is undervalued overall, and the limited opportunities to present work are indicative of school culture. A student shared, “There are always assemblies for the sports but not for arts. They will put stuff up, but there is not recognition that it's there.” Another student said that there is, “Not enough hype about it. You never see students in the paper for winning art competitions.” To increase profile and engagement, one student thought, “It would be cool to have more events or contests between schools. Publicize it and get people excited. Like sports events.” Finally, three students asked why schools have Athletic Directors but not Art Directors.

Lastly, students want guidance for careers in arts. There are students who intend to pursue arts careers (animation, video games, fashion, music) but do not know the steps to take to achieve their goals. They do not believe their teachers are equipped to provide that guidance. One student said, “They don't know what to do with art in the high school. They don't know how to help students. They don't take it to the next level. They need to show how art can help them after school.” Another student believes schools need to, “Alert people about career choices in arts - ideal careers have been portrayed as scientific or math or doctoral.” Students don't know how to get started. “I need help getting started in those systems. And I don't know where to start to access those.” Another student would like, “Some opportunities for internships. I want to be a fashion designer, but I don't know how art classes help.”

Student Focus Group Topic #3: Identify the Ideal Education Experience for Students for Each Discipline (Dance, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts)

Focus group participants were asked to **“identify the ideal education experience for students for each discipline (Dance, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts).”** With little variation, students want the same thing regardless of which discipline was being discussed. Students want exposure and access to all four disciplines. The exposure they seek is early, broad, and guided

by professional arts instructors. Students want early exposure to develop interest and a foundation in the discipline(s) they choose down the road. One student stated, “Exploration is a key element to a child’s development so kids realize what interest them most.” Another student said, “Getting exposed to it when you are younger so that you are not insecure about it when you are older. You need to build confidence.” Students want broad exposure within any given discipline, and they want the perspective of those doing it professionally. This can be accomplished by partnering with professional arts communities, by bringing in guest speakers, and going on field trips. One student wants exposure to, “More professional artists to get their insight. [Schools should] develop partnerships to get more hands-on knowledge from the pros.” Another student sees opportunity in, “Outsourcing arts to local community organizations. And that will perpetuate the creative element. NOVA is too small to pump money into a photo program. So if you can work with outside places to do so, it would be really awesome. Organizations are more than happy to work with students; you just need a liaison to get connected.”

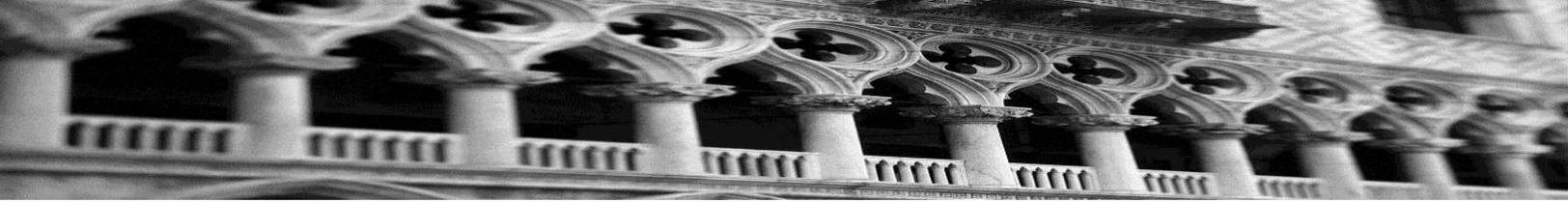
Students believe that quality teachers are essential, and many agreed this should be a full time certified arts instructor. A student shared, “Good teachers are the foundation of everything. Teachers who want to be teaching arts.” Students mentioned that instruction coverage was thin at best. “Being a high school (NOVA) that does not have access to facilities. We have no instructor. One drama teacher in place cannot often do the technical and the directing. These are two different jobs.” Another student said, “We need more music teachers, and we need teachers that know how to sing.”

As discussed earlier, students want more opportunities to showcase their work. The opportunity to present work can increase engagement and rigor, can raise awareness, and help weave art into a school’s culture. One student believes, “There should be art shows at your school that showcases all the arts classes. A [art] night would be really cool.” Students believe seeing and celebrating work could inspire more kids to pursue arts. “I would really like to see an emphasis on how art helps people. I volunteer for Art with Heart. We make art therapy books. Kids don’t understand the importance of art and how much you can get out of doing it.”

Student Focus Group Topic #4: What Do You Perceive as the Greatest Barriers Currently Facing Seattle Public Schools in Creating a Comprehensive K – 12 Arts Plan?

Students were asked **“What do you perceive as the greatest barriers currently facing Seattle Public Schools in creating a Comprehensive K – 12 Arts Plan?”** Discussions on this topic centered on funding/resources and the lack of priority of arts education. One student’s comment captured these concerns. “[The barriers are] funding for supplies, teachers who are actually interested and educated in art, ability to actually take classes, standardized testing pushing non-testing curriculum to the side (arts, history).”

Many students complained that arts education is not prioritized. There is often not enough hours in the school day to accommodate arts classes. These students would like to see more zero and seventh hour time slots so they can fit it all in. A student shared, “It’s difficult to fit into my schedule. We have a lot of core classes that we have to do, and there are classes that I would like to



take but I don't have time." Lack of funding, resources, and teacher support, according to students, is further evidence that arts education is undervalued. One student said, "My teacher recycles everything, and she pays for supplies out of her own pocket. You don't get a great salary as an art teacher in the first place." Another student commented, "I want more funding for supplies. I bring in my own supplies from my house."

Lastly, students recognize that schools focus more heavily on subject areas that are within reach of standardized testing. According to a few students, a test-centric philosophy marginalizes the role arts plays in schools and narrows course content. "Testing issues are a barrier. Classes end up teaching only what's on the test." Another student asserted, "There's so much pressure when there comes to test and people lose it. Students should do the work and have their work represent it throughout the class."

Student Focus Group Topic #5: What Do You Think should be the Characteristics of a Seattle Public School Student Upon Graduation from High School?

Students were asked what they **"think should be the characteristics of a Seattle Public School student upon graduation from high school."** Similar to the community focus group responses, answers to this question were brief, often a phrase or just a word.

Self-motivation and the desire to pursue personal goals were the characteristics that were discussed most frequently. Students want to leave high school motivated to pursue their passions and career goals. Many students hope they will emerge from high school college-ready in the hopes that they will find career opportunities in the arts. One student asserted, "[I want to be] able to get into a good college, have a good art portfolio, experience in selling plays, writing, and art stuff. [I want to be] able to have a job in arts."

Some students want to be well educated, "prepared," self-sufficient, and able to live independently. For one student, emerging from high school well-educated is the foundation for future success. "[Students should be] well educated. You might be confident and independent, but you need to feel that you learned something and that they have taught you something." Another respondent said that students should, "Be prepared, have worldly knowledge, be able to take care of yourself, know who you are and what you want to be. There's always room for change and growth." Additionally, "They should have the skills and confidence to move in a direction they are comfortable with, what they do, and who they are doing it with." Another student thought students should be, "Innovative, [able to] think on their feet. Critical thinking skills, be confident even when in hot water. Think their ways through problems."

FOCUS GROUP SURVEY RESULTS

All focus group attendants were provided a survey at the end of the discussion session. The survey was comprised of 32 scaled questions (Likert), two Yes/No questions, and two open-ended questions (open-ended responses were added to focus group concepts). A total of 228 surveys were obtained at the end of focus group sessions. As requested by SPS, this report covers overall results, Family member of student results, SPS staff results, Student results, Community Member at Large results, and Community Arts Organization/Teaching Artist. Response frequency for each group is detailed in Table 1. The survey serves to support and extend focus group findings. Specifically, the survey allows us to understand the degree to which respondents agree or disagree with specific statements. The survey was broken into four sections. In section one (see results in Table 2) respondents were asked to rate their agreement with broad questions that focused on access to and offerings of arts classes and programs. Section two (see Table 3) asked respondents to rate how important arts education is to developing and enhancing skills, increasing achievement and advancement, and improving quality of life. Section three (see Table 4) asked respondents to rate the importance of specific art education opportunities in Seattle Public Schools. Lastly, section four (see Table 5) asked respondents whether or not they are satisfied with the quantity and quality of arts education in Seattle public schools.

Table 1.
Respondent Type Frequency

Respondent type	Frequency	Percent of total
Total	228	100%
Family member	86	38%
SPS Staff	27	12%
Student	53	23%
Community Member at Large	70	31%
Community Art Org./Teaching Artist	80	35%

Overall results for section one suggests an agreement with respect to access to and offerings of arts classes and programs. Approximately 96-100% of all groups, except for Students, agreed that arts education should be accessible to all students, that it is essential to learning and should be included as a core subject, and that it prepares students for college, career, and citizenship. While the majority of students want full access to arts education, only 61.5% of students agreed that arts education should be included as a core subject. This lower score was corroborated by students in focus group sessions that see low engagement in their arts classes. These students believe it should be a choice rather than a requirement. “I’ve noticed that some of the kids in my class are sick of it, but others love it and want to stay in it. I’d love to have the choice in high school of good arts classes and good other classes for kids who don’t want to take art.” Another student asserted, “It would be better to have more flexibility, so if you are not artistically inclined, you shouldn’t be forced to do it.” Similarly, only 67.3% of students felt that arts education is essential to learning in other subject areas, and 75% believe that arts help prepare students for college, career, and citizenship.



Table 2.
Survey Section 1 - % of Respondents who “Agree/Strongly Agree”

Survey Questions	% of respondents who “Agree/Strongly Agree”					
	Total	Family Member	SPS Staff	Student	Comm. At Large	Art Org./ Teaching Artist
All students should have access to a full curriculum that includes arts education.	98.7%	100%	100%	96.2%	100%	100%
Arts education is essential to learning in other subject areas.	92.1%	100%	100%	67.3%	98.6%	98.8%
Students who are behind in math or reading should continue to have full access to arts education.	94.2%	98.8%	100%	78.4%	98.6%	100%
Arts education should be included as a core subject within the school day.	90.3%	98.8%	96.3%	61.5%	100%	98.8%
Arts education fosters behaviors and skills that prepare students for college, career, and citizenship.	93.4%	98.8%	100%	75%	100%	98.8%

As mentioned above, questions in section two of the survey focused on skill development, advancement, achievement, and quality of life. Specifically, the questions gauged how important respondents believe art education to be with respect to those concepts. Overall, there is general agreement among respondents that arts education positively influences these concepts. Again, the results show that all groups are aligned with the exception of students. Just over half of students surveyed believe that arts education increases overall academic achievement, and just over 60% believe arts increases the probability of attending college. Additionally, just over 60% of students think arts are important to develop social and self-management skills and enhance communication skills. This is in contrast to responses from other groups. These groups scored the importance of arts education highly for the development of student skills, level of achievement and overall quality of life. What is more, 100% of respondents from all groups believe that arts education enhances communication skills (as opposed to 64.2% of students).

Table 3.
Survey Section 2 – “How important arts education is for children too...”

Survey Questions	% of respondents who chose “Important/Very Important”					
	Total	Family Member	SPS Staff	Student	Comm. At Large	Art Org./ Teaching Artist
Build self-confidence	93.8%	100%	96.3%	77.4%	100%	98.7%
Develop self-management skills	87.1%	93%	92.6%	62.3%	94.1%	98.7%
Develop collaborative working skills	92.9%	95.3%	100%	77.4%	98.5%	97.4%
Develop social skills	87.6%	91.9%	96.3%	62.3%	98.5%	96.2%
Develop critical thinking skills	91.2%	95.3%	96.3%	69.8%	100%	100%
Enhance future career opportunities	86.6%	91.9%	88.9%	71.7%	89.6%	93.6%
Enhance communication skills	91.6%	100%	100%	64.2%	100%	100%
Foster creative abilities	99.1%	100%	100%	96.2%	100%	100%
Improve overall quality of life	93.8%	97.7%	100%	77.4%	100%	100%
Improve test scores	78.4%	88.2%	96.2%	77.4%	92.5%	85.7%
Increase overall academic achievement	87.4%	96.4%	96.2%	56.6%	98.5%	97.4%
Increase probability of high school graduation	85.7%	88.1%	96.3%	71.7%	91.2%	92.2%
Increase probability of attending college	81.9%	88.1%	96.2%	64.7%	85.3%	89.6%
Increase understanding of a multicultural society	94.2%	95.3%	100%	84.6%	98.5%	98.7%

Section three (see Table 4) asked respondents to rate the importance of specific art education opportunities in Seattle Public Schools. Once again, there is general agreement among most survey respondents for most questions. All groups again align, with some variation among students. However, there is one area that warrants mention. Just over half of the students surveyed believe it is important that Dance be offered as a subject provided by a certified arts specialists. This contrasts with how students scored Drama (83%), Music (93%), and Visual Arts (85%). That contrast, while not as acute, is followed by other group scores.

Table 4.
Survey Section 3 – “Rate the importance of the following arts education opportunities in Seattle Public School.”

Survey Questions	% of respondents who chose “Important/Very Important”					
	Total	Family Member	SPS Staff	Student	Comm. At Large	Art Org./ Teaching Artist
Dance as a subject during school provided by certified arts specialist teachers	80.1%	82.7%	81.5%	57.7%	90.8%	92.2%
Drama/performance as a subject during school provided by certified arts specialist teachers	92.3%	95.1%	96.3%	83%	95.4%	96.1%
Music as a subject during school provided by certified arts specialist teachers	95.2%	95.2%	100%	92.5%	97%	94.9%
Visual Arts as a subject during school provided by certified arts specialist teachers	94.6%	97.6%	100%	84.6%	98.5%	97.4%
Professional artist visiting the classroom	93.3%	91.7%	92.6%	86.8%	98.5%	97.4%
Connecting arts experiences into other subject curriculum (science, math, social studies, writing)	93.8%	96.4%	100%	84.9%	97%	95%
Field trips to art museums and live performances	93.3%	94%	100%	84.9%	95.5%	97.5%
Programs that utilize/support local arts organizations or artists	91.6%	95.2%	92.6%	77.4%	98.5%	97.5%
Summer arts programs	86.2%	84.1%	85.2%	75.5%	95.5%	89.9%
After school arts opportunities	92.4%	91.6%	88.2%	86.5%	98.5%	96.2%
Community, public, or private arts programs that include the family/parents (e.g., Family Art Night)	88.4%	91.6%	96.3%	71.7%	94.1%	93.7%
Technology as a tool in the arts	85.1%	86.7%	88.5%	76.9%	91.2%	88.6%
Art as a career path (e.g., Art Internships)	85.7%	84.3%	85.2%	81.1%	88.2%	92.3%

Overall, very few (8.2%) survey respondents are satisfied with the quantity of arts education in Seattle Public Schools. This supports both community and student focus group discussions. As mentioned earlier, focus group respondents believe that arts education offerings are inconsistent, many disciplines are underrepresented, and there is little evidence of a sequential curriculum that allows students to progress from elementary school through high school.

Seventy-five percent of survey respondents are *not* satisfied with the quality of arts education in Seattle Public Schools. There is great variation, however, among groups. For example, 54% of SPS staff *is* satisfied with the quality of arts education and almost half of students surveyed agree. Less



than 22% of Family Members, Community at Large, and Community Arts Organization/Teaching Artist, however, are satisfied. This lack of agreement is surprising given that in all other survey areas, groups, with the exception of Students, are closely aligned. Similar to above, focus group respondents attributed the poor quality to uneven access to the arts across the district and within disciplines, the lack a K-12 articulated curriculum, and limited certificated or high quality arts teachers within the district.

Table 5.
Survey Section 4

Survey Questions		Total	Family Member	SPS Staff	Student	Comm. At Large	Art Org./ Teaching Artist
Are you satisfied with the <i>quantity</i> of arts education in Seattle Public Schools?	Y	8.2%	2.3%	7.4%	34%	0%	0%
	N	91.8%	97.7%	92.6%	66%	100%	100%
Are you satisfied with the <i>quality</i> of arts education in Seattle Public Schools?	Y	24.6%	21.6%	54.2%	44.7%	14.3%	12.5%
	N	75.4%	78.4%	45.8%	55.3%	85.7%	87.5%

Survey results, overall, show clear support for increased arts education opportunities in Seattle Public Schools. There is agreement, among most respondents, that arts education should be more accessible to all students regardless of academic standing and that it is essential to the holistic development of students. Most respondents (90%) believe that arts classes should be included as a core subject, and that certified arts instruction should be the norm at all schools. Finally, most respondents (92%) are not satisfied with the quantity of arts education, and three out of every four people surveyed (75%) are not satisfied with the quality of arts education.

CONCLUSION

This report utilizes four data sources to capture the perspectives and desires of community members with respect to the development of a comprehensive, sequential arts education for all students in the district. Two surveys provide data about discipline priority as well as the importance and role of arts education in schools. Through focus group with community members and students, we gain insights into the perceptions, opinions, and beliefs of those present.

The surveys disseminated to the general public and to focus group participants highlight several important data points. First, the Seattle Public School survey results show clearly that Music and Visual Arts are the priority disciplines for a comprehensive and sequential arts education initiative. Surveys disseminated to focus group participants suggest general agreement about the importance of arts education and the role arts plays in helping students develop the skills they need to succeed in and out of the classroom. Additionally, results from this survey shows that most respondents are not satisfied with the quantity or quality of arts education in Seattle's public schools.

Focus group data provides insight into respondents' perceptions/experiences with arts education in Seattle Public Schools, their hopes for the future, and what they believe to be the biggest barriers to a comprehensive arts plan. Overall, participants believe arts education is unequal and inconsistent across the district. With that inequity and inconsistency comes variation in quality and quantity. Students described their arts experience as increasingly limited as they moved from elementary, to middle, and to high school. Both community members and students would like to see arts play a larger role in the education experience of Seattle Public School students. Arts education builds creative and critical thinking skills, and thus should be an integral part of the school day. Ideally, updates to curriculum would make arts education multi-cultural, representative, relevant to students, broader in scope, and integrated with other content areas. Similarly, students would be exposed early to all four disciplines.

The barriers discussed most frequently by participants are funding and budget allocation. Participants believe this stems from a cultural climate that does not value arts education. As an undervalued education "extra," the arts are often marginalized or eliminated. Leadership and vision are two other areas participants cited as barriers to an initiative.

Focus group participants believe Seattle Public Schools high School graduates should have strong thinking skills. Critical, creative, flexible, and independent thinking skills will help them succeed in life and in career. Respondents believe arts play a vital role in the development of these skills and helps students become self-aware, confident community members. The students themselves want to emerge from high school college-ready and prepared for the future.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Focus group respondents discussed their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and in some instances, their recommendations. Below are participant recommendations, in order of frequency.

Integrating Arts with Core Curriculum

Respondents believe that art is highly relevant to core subjects because it builds creative thinking skills and improves engagement and application. Furthermore, arts programs often require students to practice emoting, presenting, reciting, collaborating, and problem-solving. The development of these skills is essential to a students' education regardless of subject area. Respondents see opportunities to integrate dance with PE, to integrate theatre with social sciences, to integrate music with math, and visual arts with language arts. Participants would like arts certified instructors to work with teachers to develop curricula that connects arts disciplines with core subject areas.

Predictable and Sequential Art Education

Focus group respondents believe that arts education in Seattle Public Schools is “sporadic,” “haphazard,” and “unpredictable.” They believe each school offers a unique mix of arts programs that follow equally unique curriculums. As a result, according to some discussions, the arts education students are exposed to is stunted, fractured, and inconsistent. Respondents would like a vision for a sequential and balanced curriculum that is predictable. This vision should be communicated proactively to all stakeholders. A communication plan dedicated to vision, implementation, and curriculum developments should be ongoing and reliable.

Sharing Success

Respondents recognize the variation in programs across the district, and while discussing this several participants recommended learning from those successes. For example, some schools have great success with certain programs and or specific disciplines. Some respondents believe the district would benefit from a public schools arts consortium/forum that identifies program and discipline successes within the district. Developing and disseminating a set of best practices for programs can help school administrators set up new or improve existing programs at each school. Schools, community organizations, teaching artists, and others can then use this consortium as a resource for resources sharing, teacher training, and curriculum development.

Arts Education Liaison

Many respondents would like to see positions dedicated to developing and strengthening community partnerships. Respondents believe that Seattle's art community is strong but disconnected from public schools. As a primary contact point that links community organizations to schools, the arts liaison position could help bridge this gap. This position would be charged with maintaining and creating the partnerships that can provide schools/students with arts opportunities such as external events, artist residencies, career guidance, mentorship, internships, and more. The

liaison would create a communication plan that ensures all schools are aware of the resources and opportunities available to them.

APPENDIX A

Seattle Public Schools Survey

		DANCE	MUSIC	THEATRE	VISUAL ARTS
Q1	Assuming there was adequate budget, arts staffing and resources for any of the disciplines selected, if you had to choose only two arts disciplines to BEGIN our focus on providing comprehensive, sequential arts education for all students, which would you prioritize? First Choice:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q2	Second Choice:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q3	Which of the following categories best describes your role or interest in arts education (select one)?				
Q4	Please enter your zip code:				
Q5	Email Address:				



APPENDIX B

Community & Student Focus Group Questions

Thank you for participating in the Seattle Public Schools: Arts Public Engagement Meetings. This information will help to shape the Arts Plan in Seattle Public Schools and will increase quality arts education access for all students, grades K - 12. We will be asking the following questions in the focus groups. However, if you have additional information you would like to share, please write your answers in the space provided. All of your answers will remain confidential.

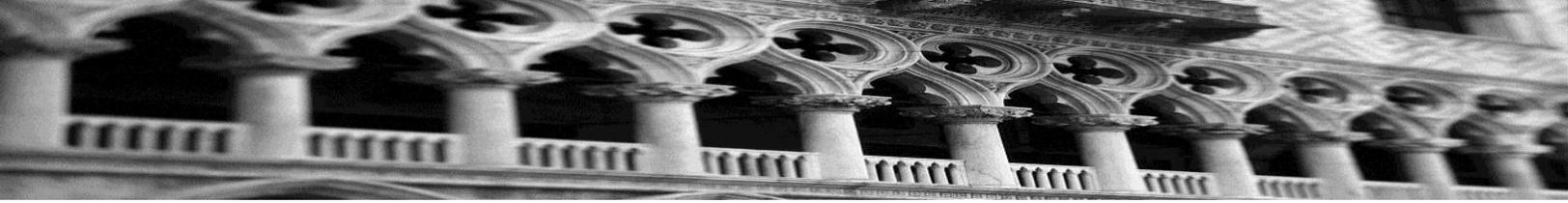
**Questions varied somewhat depending on participating group (Community or Student)

1. Please describe your experience with the Arts in Seattle Public Schools.
2. Now more broadly, please describe your wishes and hopes for Arts Education in Seattle Public Schools in the future. What opportunities do you want?
3. We want to better understand your ideal educational experiences in Arts Education in specific disciplines. Think about what you wish were included in each discipline such as styles, mediums, cultures/traditions, history, technology, how the arts can apply to careers, and so on.
 - a. To start, please describe your vision for Dance Education
 - b. Please describe your vision for Music Education
 - c. Please describe your vision for Theatre Arts
 - d. Please describe your vision for Visual Arts
4. What do you perceive as the greatest barriers/challenges currently facing Seattle Public Schools in implementing a Comprehensive K – 12 Arts Plan? (e.g., getting into art classes)
5. *Generally speaking, what do you think should be the characteristics of a Seattle Public School student upon graduation from high school? (e.g., knowledge, skills, qualities) For example, what do you want to be able to do after high school? What skills and knowledge do you want to have?*

APPENDIX C

Focus Group Survey Questions (Community and Student)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Section 1						
Q1	All students should have access to a full curriculum that includes arts education.	<input type="radio"/>				
Q2	Art education is essential to learning in other subject areas.	<input type="radio"/>				
Q3	Students who are behind in math or reading should continue to have full access to art education.	<input type="radio"/>				
Q4	Arts education should be included as a core subject into the school day.	<input type="radio"/>				
Q5	Arts education fosters behaviors and skills that prepare students for college, career, and citizenship.	<input type="radio"/>				
Section 2		Not at all Important	Slightly Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important
Q6	Build self-confidence	<input type="radio"/>				
Q7	Develop self-management skills	<input type="radio"/>				
Q8	Develop collaborative working skills	<input type="radio"/>				
Q9	Develop social skills	<input type="radio"/>				
Q10	Develop critical thinking skills	<input type="radio"/>				
Q11	Enhance future career opportunities	<input type="radio"/>				
Q12	Enhance communication skills	<input type="radio"/>				
Q13	Foster creative abilities	<input type="radio"/>				
Q14	Improve overall quality of life	<input type="radio"/>				
Q15	Improve test scores	<input type="radio"/>				
Q16	Increase overall academic achievement	<input type="radio"/>				
Q17	Increase probability of high school graduation	<input type="radio"/>				
Q18	Increase probability of attending college	<input type="radio"/>				



Q19	Increase understanding of a multicultural society	<input type="radio"/>				
Section 3		Not at all Important	Slightly Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important
Q20	Dance as a subject during school provided by certified arts specialist teachers	<input type="radio"/>				
Q21	Drama/performance as a subject during school provided by certified arts specialist teachers	<input type="radio"/>				
Q22	Music as a subject during school provided by certified arts specialist teachers	<input type="radio"/>				
Q23	Visual arts as a subject during school provided by certified arts specialist teachers	<input type="radio"/>				
Q24	Professional artists visiting the classroom	<input type="radio"/>				
Q25	Connecting arts experiences into other subject curriculum (science, math, social studies, writing)	<input type="radio"/>				
Q26	Field trips to arts museums and live performances	<input type="radio"/>				
Q27	Programs that utilize/support local arts organizations or artists	<input type="radio"/>				
Q28	Summer arts programs	<input type="radio"/>				
Q29	After school arts opportunities	<input type="radio"/>				
Q30	Community, public, or private arts programs that include the family/parents	<input type="radio"/>				
Q31	Technology as a tool in the arts	<input type="radio"/>				
Q32	Art as a career path (e.g., Arts Internships)	<input type="radio"/>				
Section 4		Yes	No			
Q33	Are you satisfied with the quantity of arts education in your school? Why or why not?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			
Q34	Are you satisfied with the quality of arts education in your school? Why or why not?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			

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