

Youth Arts Opportunities in NCW

In 2017, Icicle Fund commissioned a study to understand arts opportunities in and out of school for students in grades K-12 in North Central Washington. The findings are based on a comprehensive collection of data from the Wenatchee Valley (WV) including Leavenworth to Cashmere, Wenatchee and East Wenatchee as well as Okanogan County (OC) using a mix of class enrollment data, surveys of school principals, teaching artists, and community arts organizations, as well as interviews with engaged community members and a student focus group.

Key findings are listed below. The full study report is available at Icicle Fund's website.

Student Benefits from the Arts

Multiple peer-reviewed studies show that access to arts (visual, dance, theater, and musical arts) provide the following benefits to students:

- Improved learning capacity in other subjects, such as language and mathematics;
- Higher levels of achievement for underserved students;
- Enhanced creative, critical thinking and problem-solving skills;
- Reduced emotional and behavioral problems;
- Enhanced ability to collaborate and communicate.

Key Findings from North Central Washington Study

- Arts providers, school principals, and community members agree: **the region values the arts and young people are eager to participate**. Furthermore, the **quality of the community-based arts education organizations** is considered an important strength.
- Nearly 60% of WV principals report that **arts opportunities and offerings are on the rise**. In only one school has it been decreasing in the last three years.
- WV and OC schools rely on two **different models for in-school arts education**. OC mostly use external, certified teaching artists and partnerships with non-profit arts organizations for their arts education, whereas WV schools primarily use school teachers who are arts specialists supplemented by uncertified external artists and volunteers to deliver arts education.
- The region's **community arts organizations represent a wide variety** in the type of arts and number of students they serve, budget, and staff and volunteer rosters.
- Nearly 90% of **community arts organization respondents report they collaborate with schools**, and 64% of principals report having a partnership with an arts organization or teaching artists. About one-third of those partnerships are happening outside the school day. Most partnerships focus on visual arts.
- Inside and outside the schools, student access to, participation in, acquired dosage of, and quality of the available **arts education varies significantly between school districts and parts of the region**.
- Similar to national data, **music and visual arts are much more available in the schools than dance and theater**.
- Fewer *elementary* schools in North Central Washington incorporate arts education than the national average and the dosage and quality is significantly less than the goal for Seattle Public Schools, which are minimums of one hour per week each of visual and music taught by certified arts teachers, taught sequentially. This is particularly true for visual arts. This finding is corroborated by teaching artists outside the schools, who sees **inadequate arts education in the schools** as the greatest challenge of arts education (in WV).

More Key Findings from North Central Washington Study

- Generally, *middle and high schools* in the region exceed the national average presence of music and visual arts, although not for dance and theater. WV high school students participate mostly in visual arts, but those who participate in music receive a higher dosage. Students receive less arts than the goal for Seattle Public Schools, which is a minimum of four semesters.
- Both WV and OC have a high percentage of Caucasian and Latino students. OC further includes a significant number of Native American youth. **Latino and Native students are enrolled in less art overall (inside and outside of school)**, when it is not a mandatory part of the school day. Barriers to access include cost, communication, and transportation.
- **Coordination and school level planning for arts education is limited.** While WV schools have documented music and visual arts curricula, very few have a written arts plan or arts coordinators. Some arts curricula are aligned with Washington state's Arts K-12 Learning Standards.
- **Professional development for arts teachers vary by school and student age.** Generally, secondary arts teachers engage in more professional development than elementary arts teachers.
- *Elementary* schools and teaching artists rank **training in arts integration** (teaching any subject through and with the arts) highest of all arts related training needs. *Secondary* school principals in WV rank **training in OSPI Classroom Based Performance Assessments** higher than arts concepts, skills, or techniques.
- Across the WV, **most schools have dedicated music education and visual arts space.** The numbers are highest at the high school level.
- The study identified a **wide variety in approaches to arts funding**, as well as the creativity schools use to fund arts programs, sometimes without a specific arts line item in the budget.
- The size of arts budgets varies greatly from \$200 to \$3,500 across schools in WV. The money is spent on arts supplies and musical instruments. Additional **sources of arts funding include foundation grants, district general funds, and parent donations.** School budgets typically do not include salaries for arts specialists. Those are generally included in a district's central office budget.
- **Barriers to arts inside schools include outside pressure to focus on subjects other than arts, limited (or no) staffing, and facility limitations.**
- **Lack of coordination** amongst community arts organizations and between those organizations and schools as well as transportation are seen as the biggest challenges to arts education by WV organizations.
- WV principals and external teaching artists would **target new investment to more FTE of certified arts teachers, followed by after-school programs and artists in residency/community arts partnerships**, as opposed to art supplies, equipment, or facilities. In OC, the highest priority of new investments would be to after-school arts programs and secondly to more FTE of certified arts teachers.

For more information or if you are interested in being involved with arts opportunities for our youth, please contact Icicle Fund Executive Director Christine J. Morgan at cjmorgan@iciclefund.org.

Icicle Fund has for two decades funded work to protect the environment of, promote the natural and cultural history of, and advance the arts in North Central Washington.

Icicle Fund believes:

- The Arts nurture the human spirit, transform lives, and connect people to place
- The Arts build strong economies and cohesive communities across social, economic, and racial boundaries
- The Arts are fundamental to a well-rounded education and help all students to succeed in school and life
- Collaboration between community leaders, artists, schools, and businesses ensure sustainable, quality arts programs
- Everyone in NCW deserves access to, and engagement with, The Arts at levels similar to urban areas