



The Art of Creating Positive Change

The arts have long been used to aid in healing, provide a means of expression, nurture academic growth, and build strong, cohesive communities.

COMPAS, a well-established arts education nonprofit in Minnesota, understands the innate need for interaction with the arts and culture, and provides myriad artistic opportunities to help bridge gaps, restore a sense of connection, and help people cope with the trauma experienced worldwide in recent years.

INTRODUCTION

Leveraging creativity for good in a challenging world

The negative consequences of the last several years have been laid bare as we transition from the COVID-19 pandemic to living with the virus as an endemic concern. **We're learning to live in a new reality where divides must be bridged and connections restored.**

Children especially have been impacted by isolation on several fronts: mental wellness, academic readiness, and social inclusion. But people of all ages have endured traumas on a global scale — before and beyond the pandemic — including war, climate change, racism, sexism, and more. Not only do we continue to experience the lasting impacts of the pandemic within the healthcare landscape, but within the social landscape as well.



Today, when chasms and setbacks seem almost overwhelming, scientific research proves that creative opportunities aren't optional; they're necessary. COMPAS and other such arts education nonprofits offer a distinct advantage and opportunity to bring meaningful creative interactions to key stakeholder groups.

Moreover, these arts experiences help fulfill critical objectives:

improving mental wellness, enhancing academic performance, driving positive community outcomes and connections, and influencing social progress.

With that in mind, this white paper approaches the topic from four perspectives: the **Arts and Well-Being**, the **Arts and Academic Benefits**, the **Arts and Community**, and the **Arts and Social Progress**.

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WE ARE ALL BORN *creative*

BUT WE MUST WORK TO STAY THAT WAY.



WHEN WE INVEST IN PRESERVING THIS PART OF OUR MINDS, WE HOLD ON TO A PIECE OF OURSELVES THAT MAKES US BETTER SUITED TO NOT ONLY SURVIVE IN THIS WORLD, BUT **THRIVE.**

OUR CREATIVITY *is precious*



WE CAN'T SQUANDER IT. WE CAN'T DEFUND IT. WE CAN'T LET IT BECOME EXTRACURRICULAR. BECAUSE IT'S NOT.



IT IS ESSENTIAL *it's* ELEMENTAL HEALING, TEACHING LIFE-GIVING



The Arts and Academic Benefits



Engagement with the arts and culture in the classroom can significantly improve educational outcomes. It can also help pave the way to success in the workplace by encouraging students to apply creative thinking throughout their lives. In fact, having the opportunity to express oneself artistically during childhood has been linked to positive academic, social, and emotional outcomes later in life.¹⁴ Affirmative connections also exist between exposure to art and to other social and civic activities, such as volunteering in communities.¹⁵



Creativity in the classroom

In the first-ever, large-scale, randomized, and controlled trial study of a city's collective efforts to restore arts education through community partnerships and investments, the Brookings Institution, a nonprofit public policy organization, found that **"a substantial increase in arts educational experiences has remarkable impacts on students' academic, social, and emotional outcomes."** At participating schools, fostering and supporting arts experiences led to:

- 

Less challenging student behavior
- 

Improved writing skills
- 

Greater compassion for others

Additionally, looking only at participating elementary schools, the study found **"that increases in arts learning positively and significantly affect students' school engagement, college aspirations, and their inclinations to draw upon works of art as a means for empathizing with others. In terms of school engagement, students in the treatment group were more likely to agree that school work is enjoyable [and] makes them think about things in new ways, and that their school offers programs, classes, and activities that keep them interested in school."**¹⁶



A study on the effects of exposure to the arts on low- to moderate-income residents in NYC neighborhoods found an **18% increase in kids scoring in the top stratum on English and math exams.**

Also in the NYC-based study, students involved in the school arts programs were:

4X

more likely to participate in a math and science fair

4X

more likely to be recognized for academic achievement

3X

more likely to win an award for school attendance

3X

more likely to be elected to class office¹⁷

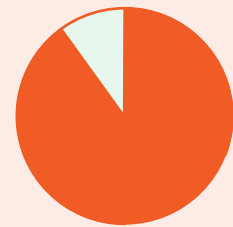


Also, low-income students highly engaged in the arts are **more than twice as likely to graduate** from college as their peers with no arts education, according to the San Diego Workforce Partnership.¹⁸

Americans overwhelmingly support arts education

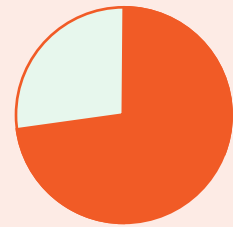
Although most school districts have drastically cut arts education over the past several decades, Americans are unequivocally and overwhelmingly supportive of arts education—both in schools and the community.

A 2018 national public opinion survey found:



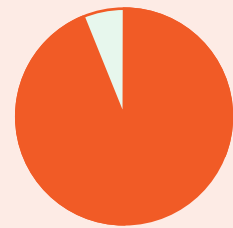
91%

of American agree: that *“the arts are part of a well-rounded education”*



74%

agree that *“the arts help students perform better academically”*



94%

agree that students should receive an arts education *in elementary, middle and high schools*¹⁹



Additionally, according to “Art for Life’s Sake: The Case for Arts Education,” a report published in 2021 by the Commission on the Arts: *“For all Americans to reap the full benefits of the arts, we need to ensure that access to arts education is not merely a privilege enjoyed by some but a right guaranteed to all.”*²⁰



Creativity after graduation

The benefits of experiencing and engaging in creative expression extend beyond the classroom and into the workplace in many important ways. Involvement with the arts fosters teamwork and collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, public speaking, tolerance, flexibility, and attention to detail—essential skills that employers say they often have trouble finding in job candidates—again, according to the San Diego Workforce Partnership.

American workers understand that creative thinking skills are crucial to success in the workplace.



55%

of employed adults say their jobs require them to **“be creative and come up with ideas that are new and unique.”**



60%

of respondents said ***the more creative and innovative they are at their jobs, the more successful they are in the workplace.***²¹

Plus, creativity is considered a must-have attribute among job seekers—and the companies that hire them. **“Creativity ultimately leads to innovation, and innovation creates value,”** asserts Laurent Charpentier in *Forbes*.²² Looking for further proof? Google “creativity and the workplace” and then waded through the millions of results.



Creating academic benefits with COMPAS

Students thrive when everyone has access to creative opportunities that enrich lives and communities.

COMPAS teaching artists encourage participation in the classroom through their kindness, compassion, and emotional intelligence. And the results can be amazing: Students who’ve never spoken up in class have written and performed creative works in front of their classes or even their entire schools. This isn’t unusual—it’s a common occurrence teachers remark upon with COMPAS programming.

Recognizing the adverse consequences of racial disparities, COMPAS takes a leadership role in delivering priority access to creative learning experiences for BIPOC communities. Plus, the diversity of COMPAS teaching artists inspires students from marginalized communities, who see themselves reflected in the artistic professionals who work with them.

Through creative engagement, students become calmer, more engaged in learning, and demonstrate improved literacy and compassion for others.



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