



## CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL BLOG

### THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF "EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT"

By Joe Landon, Executive Director, California Alliance for Arts Education

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What does the passage of the new Federal education legislation, "Every Student Succeeds Act," mean for California? Joe Landon, Executive Director of the California Alliance for Arts Education, one of the California Arts Council's key partners in CREATE CA, contemplates that question in this week's blog. - See more at: <http://www.arts.ca.gov/blog/blogdetail.php?id=237#sthash.CzORo5Q5.dpuf>

If you're like me, you've had more than enough time – fourteen years - to contemplate the unintended consequences of "No Child Left Behind", such as making schools less engaging and creative, marginalizing the arts, social studies and science, and neglecting the values and skills that help students develop the ability to solve problems.

As we bid adieu to 2015 and “No Child Left Behind”, I am ready for a change! Let’s start contemplating the unintended consequences of “Every Student Succeeds”. Granted, the legislation was just signed into law last week, but there’s no time like the present to envision the future...

First, I envision the unintended consequence of this legislation being that the arts become an essential component of a comprehensive education that every child receives. The language in the bill specifically states that arts and music are included in a definition of a "well-rounded education."

What if we were to bring the arts into our classrooms as a strategy to address key elements of school and student success, including student engagement, parental involvement, school climate, student achievement and outcome? What if we were to envision an arts education delivery system which included credentialed arts teachers, teaching artists, and teachers trained to implement arts integration across the curriculum?

This is the case we’ve been making for the past four years at the California Alliance for Arts Education as we have advocated locally, statewide and nationally that Title I funds may be appropriately used to support arts education strategies that target Title I goals. Those goals include academic achievement in math and literacy, student engagement, parent involvement, and improving school climate.

The body of research that accompanies these strategies makes the evidence abundantly clear – properly implemented, the arts can transform student learning and achievement. We need to recognize and promote the essential role of the arts in a ‘well rounded education.’”

A second unintended consequence of “Every Student Succeeds” could be a more equal distribution of arts learning, regardless of a student’s economic status. In 2007 the research study “An Unfinished Canvas – Arts Education in California” reported that “in California’s more affluent schools, almost twice the percentage of students received instruction in each arts discipline compared with the high-poverty schools.”

Where the arts don’t exist in schools, the education picture can look dreary in other aspects of school life, including higher dropout rates, less availability of high-level coursework or effective teachers, and poor academic performance. Just as we expect schools to deliver math and literacy, they should be expected to provide the basics of arts learning. Every student, regardless of where they happen to live, deserves access to high quality arts education!

Finally, what an unintended consequence it would be if “Every Student Succeeds” were to ignite students, parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, arts organizations, community and business leaders, to seize the momentum of this ‘sea

change' in education, where we share a recognition that the laws of the past have not served our students adequately, and as advocates for arts education, we are raising our voices to communicate what we know so well – the arts can unlock student learning and promote success in school and in life.

What if student film makers were to respond to our “Student Voices Campaign”, sponsored by the California Arts Council and Sony Pictures Entertainment, by submitting short films capturing the value of arts education in their schools; what if arts education advocates, equipped with the resources provided by Arts for LA, Arts for All, and the California Alliance, were to show up at school board meetings, urging board members to include the arts in their district LCAPS; what if school districts were to follow the example of Chula Vista Elementary and San Diego Unified, by prioritizing arts education in their curriculum?

As the new year begins let's commit ourselves to the positive consequences of every student's success.



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