



# Tennessee State of the Arts Study

## Summary Report

May 2024



*The State of the Arts Study was facilitated by the Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation using its Music (and Arts) Education District Support Services (MEDSS)™ Assessment, and was made possible thanks to the generous support of the CMA Foundation. Conducted in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Education and participating school districts.*



# About the State of the Arts Study

The State of the Arts (SOTA) Study was conducted during the 2021-23 school years as a comprehensive assessment of school district arts (dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts) education programs and was implemented using the **Music (and Arts) Education District Support Services™ (MEDSS™)** assessment designed by the **Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation (MHOF)**.

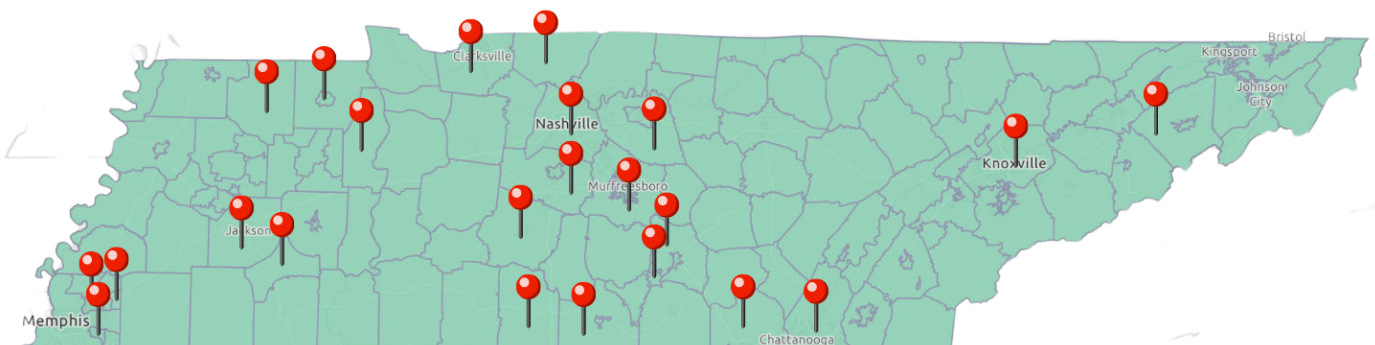
MEDSS is a revolutionary district wide assessment that utilizes district-provided data and teacher context gathered through surveys to arts teachers to identify and address the challenges and barriers creating inequities for student access and participation in music and arts programming.



Generously funded by the **CMA Foundation**, districts opted-in to the voluntary study through participation in the Tennessee Arts Education Network, which provided the assessment for free for any interested district.

## Participating districts include:

- Arlington Community Schools
- Bartlett City Schools
- Benton County Schools
- Chester County Schools
- Clarksville-Montgomery County School System
- Coffee County School District
- Germantown Municipal School District
- Giles County School System
- Greene County Schools
- Hamilton County Schools
- Jackson-Madison County School System
- Knox County Schools
- Lincoln County Schools
- Marion County Schools
- Maury County Public Schools
- Metro Nashville Public Schools
- Paris Special School District
- Robertson County Schools
- Rutherford County Schools
- Tullahoma City Schools
- Weakley County Schools
- Williamson County School
- Wilson County Schools





## Participation Highlights

- **Twenty-three (23)** districts (**16%** of Tennessee districts) participated in the State of the Arts Study.
- **589** schools are included in the State of the Arts Study. This represents **38%** of the total number of schools in Tennessee, including **297** elementary schools, **125** middle schools, **108** high schools, and **59** mixed-level schools.
- **397,088** students are represented in these data and findings, approximately **41%** of the total K–12 student population statewide.

## Participating District Demographics

Student Ethnicities		Student Characteristics	
White	73%	Socioeconomically Disadvantaged (ED)	24%
African American	16%	Special Education (SPED)	13%
Hispanic	9%	English Language Learners (ELL)	9%
Other	2%	Homeless/Foster	2%
		Migrant	<1%

## Comparison of Participating Districts

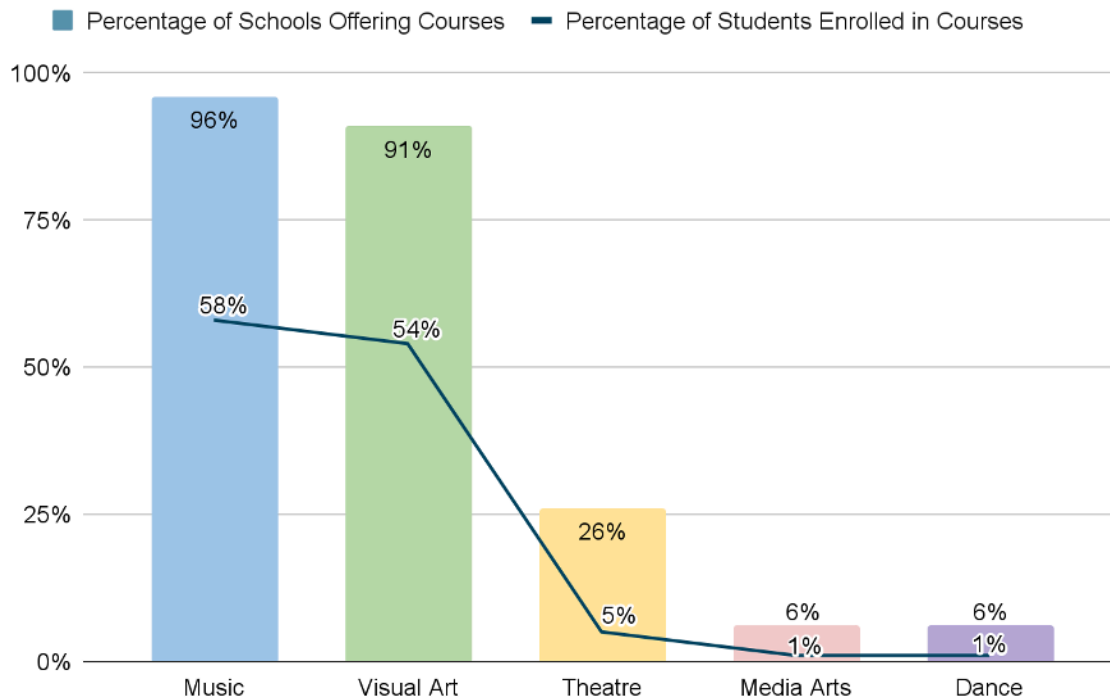
### Observations

- **Economically disadvantaged** students and students attending school within a **small district** (up to 15 total schools) have the **most significant** access challenges to all art forms.
- District **size** and **economically disadvantaged status** do not appear to impact program student enrollment/retention, lack of feeder programs, and/or gaps in K–12 sequential course offerings within feeder patterns, as districts of **all sizes** and **demographics** face similar challenges with **programming**.
- Among the participating districts:
  - **One** district offers only **one** art form, additionally, this district is the **smallest** district with the **highest** percentage of **economically disadvantaged students**.
  - **Nine** districts offer up to **three** art forms and range in size from 3-15 schools.
  - **Seven** districts offer **all five** art forms and range in size from 22-121 schools.
- **Six** of the seven districts offering all five art forms **have district-level arts curriculum directors in place**.
- Based on teacher survey feedback, the **four** districts with the **highest** percentage of **teachers** that are spread across **multiple campuses** teach within **small districts** of 15 or fewer schools.
- Smaller schools with **low arts enrollment** often face scheduling challenges as there are fewer faculty, resulting in potential scheduling overlaps.

*We consider the 23 districts participating in this study to be representative of all Tennessee school districts. Therefore, we believe the findings and recommendations presented in this study reflect the characteristics and needs of the state as a whole.*

# Arts Course Offerings and Enrollments

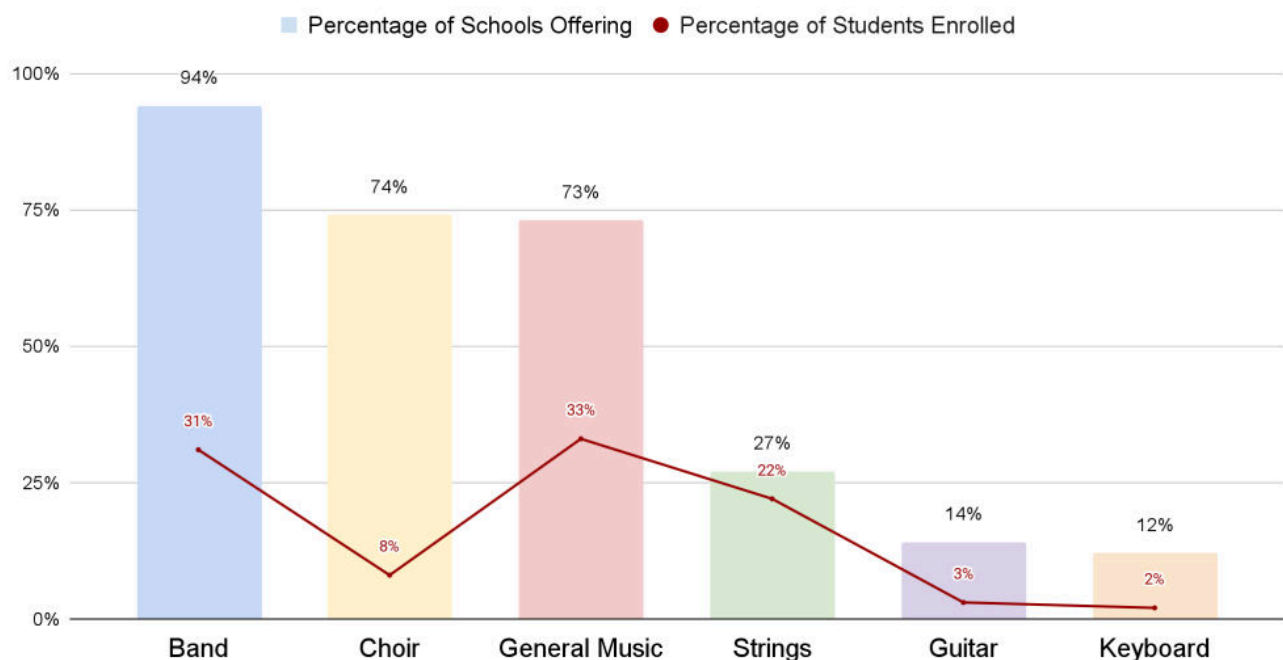
The following chart illustrates the percentage of schools offering courses in the respective artistic discipline (**bars**) and the percentage of students enrolled in the respective courses (**line**).



## Observations:

- **Music** is the most offered visual and performing arts form with the **highest percentage** of students enrolled followed by **visual art**, there is then a substantial **decrease** in the number of **theatre, media arts** and **dance** programs offered.
- Considering the number of **theatre** programs offered, enrollment is significantly **low**.

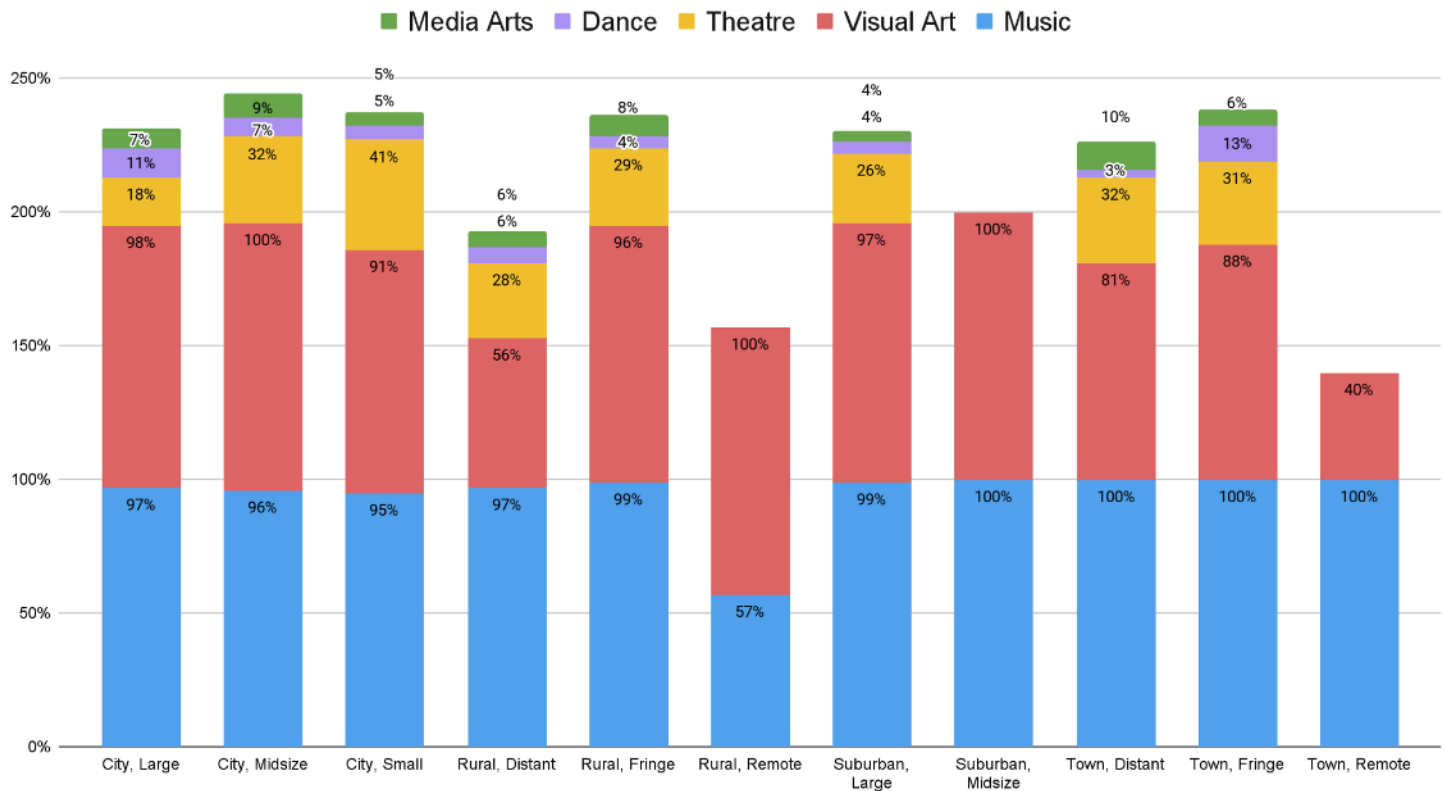
## Course Offerings and Enrollment for Music Types - Secondary Only



## Observations:

- Within secondary music, **band** is the **most offered** music type followed by choir and general music, there is then a **substantial decrease** in the number of string, guitar and keyboard programs offered.
- Compared to all other music types, there is a **greater** proportion of students participating in **orchestra/strings** when compared to the percentage of schools **offering** the music type.

## Arts Program Offerings by Locale Type



## Observations:

- There are no **theatre, dance** or **media arts** programs at schools within the following locales:
  - Rural, Remote;
  - Suburban, Midsize; and,
  - Town, Remote.

*Note: Locale definitions originate from the Locale Classifications and Criteria<sup>1</sup> in use by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The NCES locale framework is composed of four basic types (City, Suburban, Town, and Rural) that each contains three subtypes. It relies on standard urban and rural definitions developed by the U.S. Census Bureau.*



<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/annualreports/topical-studies/locale/definitions>

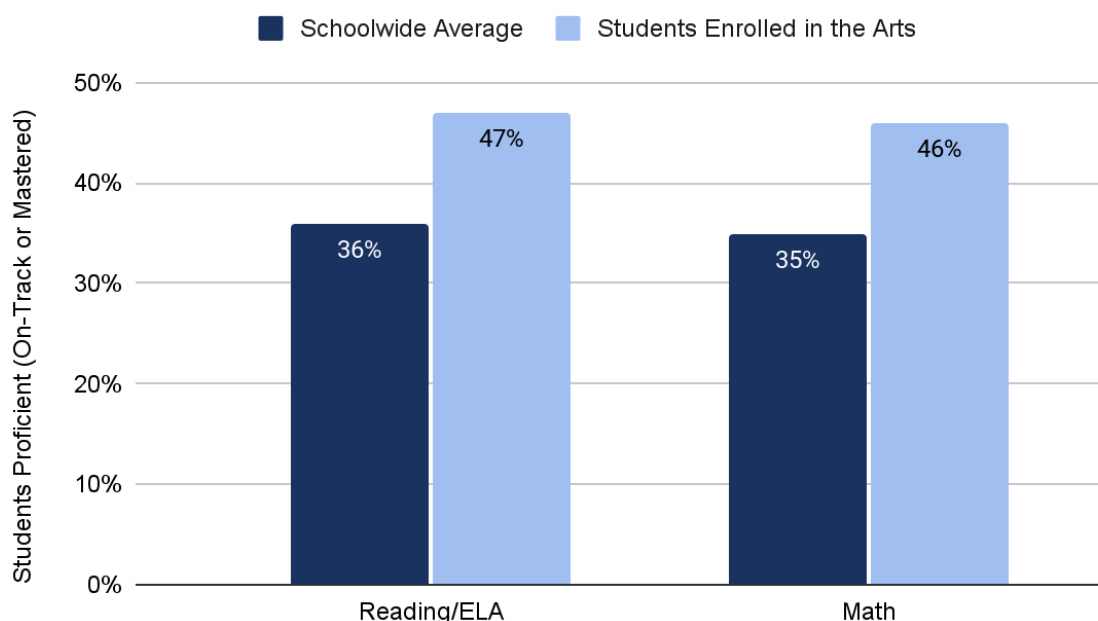
## Key Finding

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Achievement data for students enrolled in the arts shows higher ELA/reading and math proficiency rates, as well as higher annual attendance rates, compared to school- and district-wide averages, suggesting participation in the arts is a promising practice that may positively influence students' academic performance and attendance.

### Reading/ELA & Math Proficiency

This chart presents a comparison of **Students Enrolled in the Arts vs. Schoolwide Averages**. For the purposes of the State of the Arts Study/MEDSS assessment, a student is considered **proficient** if they scored **met** or **exceeding expectations** in the content area based on test scores.

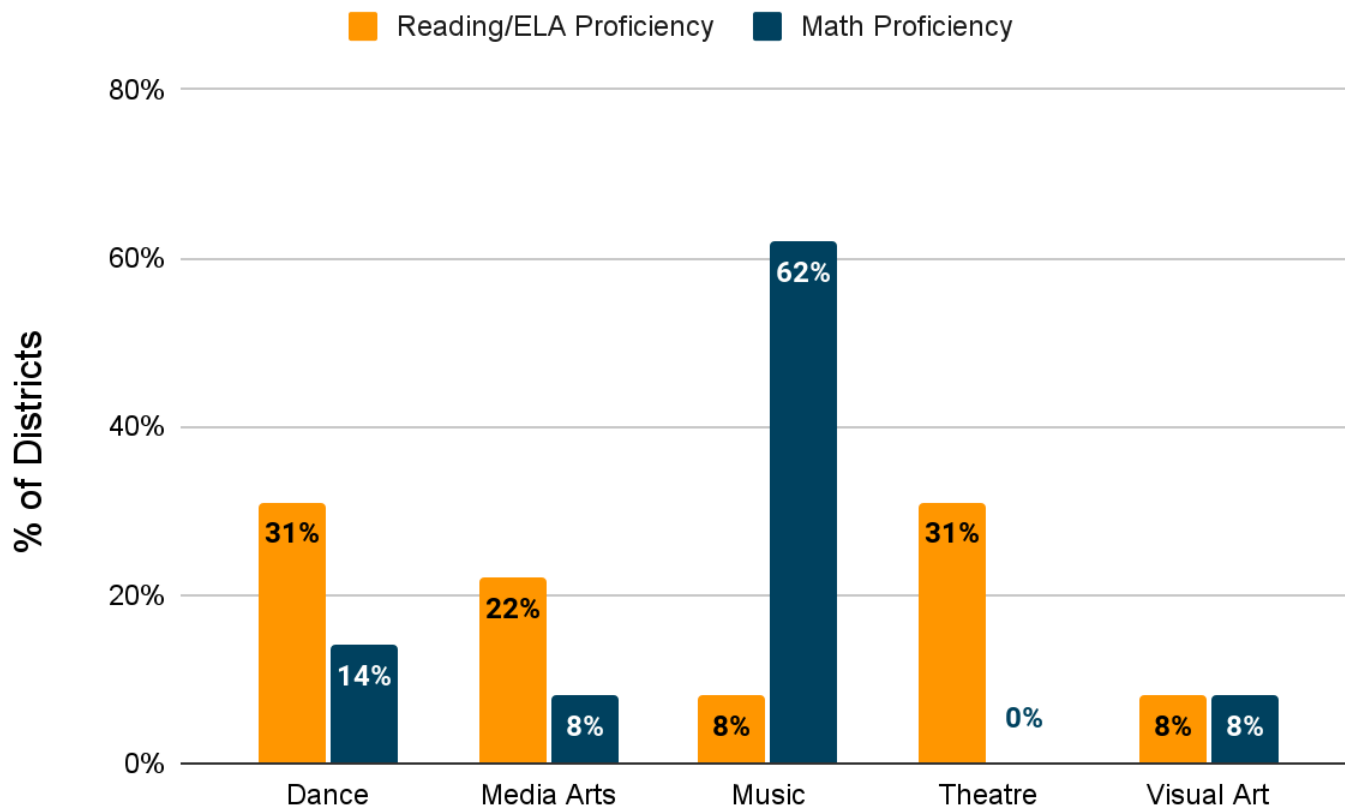


### Observations:

- **Reading/ELA:** Among **77%** of districts, students enrolled in arts programs demonstrate **higher** reading proficiency rates compared to the total school population.
  - Across all districts, **36%** of students achieve reading proficiency. This figure rises to **47%** when looking at just those students **participating in arts courses**.
  - Schools where arts students surpass the general student body in reading proficiency see an **average increase of 16 percentage points** in these rates.
- **Math:** In **70%** of districts, students enrolled in arts programs demonstrate **higher** math proficiency rates compared to the total school population.
  - Across all districts, **35%** of students achieve math proficiency. This figure rises to **46%** for students **participating in arts courses**.
  - Schools where arts students surpass the general student body in math proficiency see an **average increase of 17 percentage points** in these rates.

## Proficiency by Art Form

The following chart represents the percentage of districts reporting the highest proficiency (those students scoring 'met' or 'exceeded expectations') by art form:

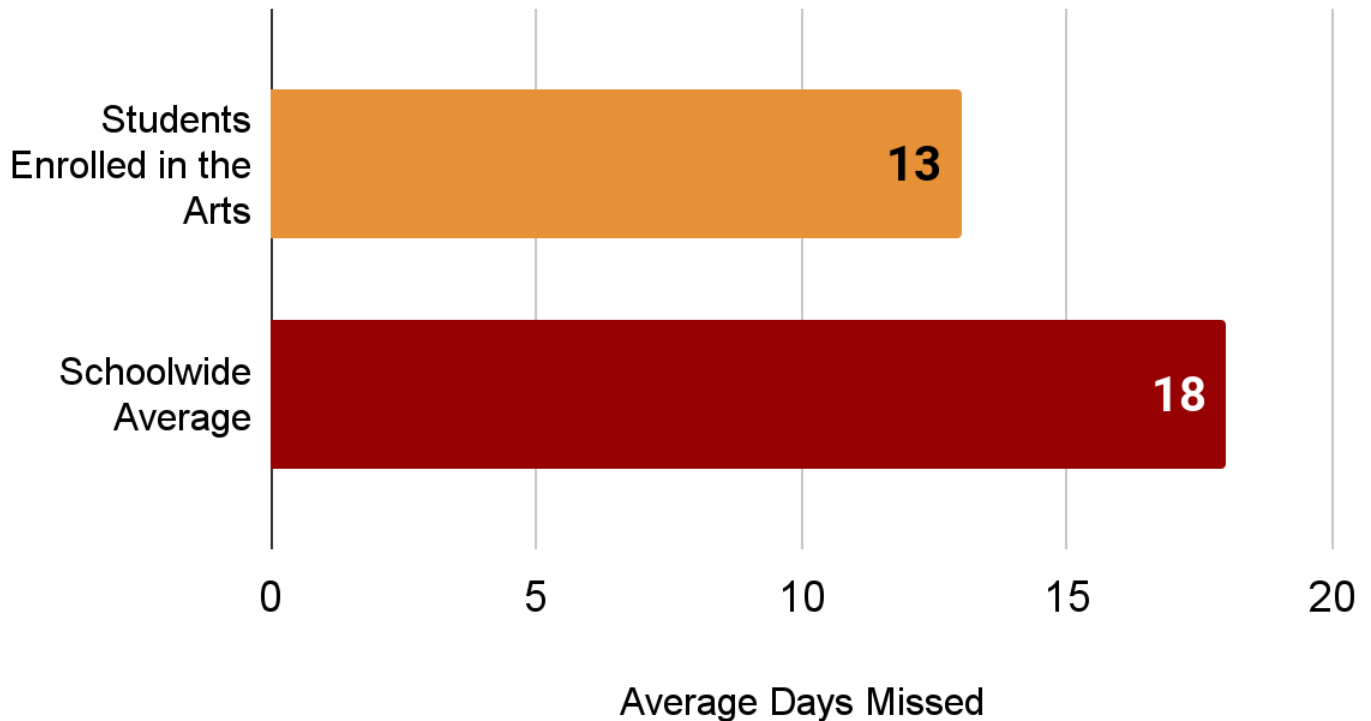


### Observations:

- In an analysis of all five art forms, **62%** of districts exhibited the **highest** student proficiency in **reading** within **theatre** or **dance**. Media arts showed the highest proficiency in **22%** of districts, whereas visual art and music were reported with the highest proficiency each in **8%** of districts.
  - Among the various **music** types, **strings** led in **38%** of districts. Choir and band were predominant in **23%** of districts each. Keyboard was reported with the highest proficiency in **8%** of districts, with one district displaying an equal proficiency between keyboard and choir.
- Regarding **math** proficiency among the art forms, **music** was observed as the leading category in **62%** of districts. Dance was noted in **14%**, visual art and media arts each in **8%**, with one district showing a tie between music and visual art. *Note: no districts exhibited the highest student proficiency in math within theatre.*
  - Looking at just the various **music** types, **band** and **strings** were each observed with the highest math proficiency in **31%** of districts as having the highest student proficiency, while choir was noted in **23%**, and both guitar and keyboard were observed in **8%** of districts.

## Attendance

The following chart compares the average number of school days missed between the entire student population (schoolwide average) and only those students enrolled in the arts.



### Observations:

- **73%** of districts reported **higher annual attendance rates** for students enrolled in the arts.
- The average **districtwide attendance rate** for all districts is **90%**. For those students enrolled in arts courses, the **average attendance rate** jumps to **93%**, suggesting that students participating in the arts miss fewer school days.
- On average, at schools where arts students have a **higher attendance rate** than the schoolwide average, the **average increase** is **12%** for students enrolled in the arts.





## Key Finding

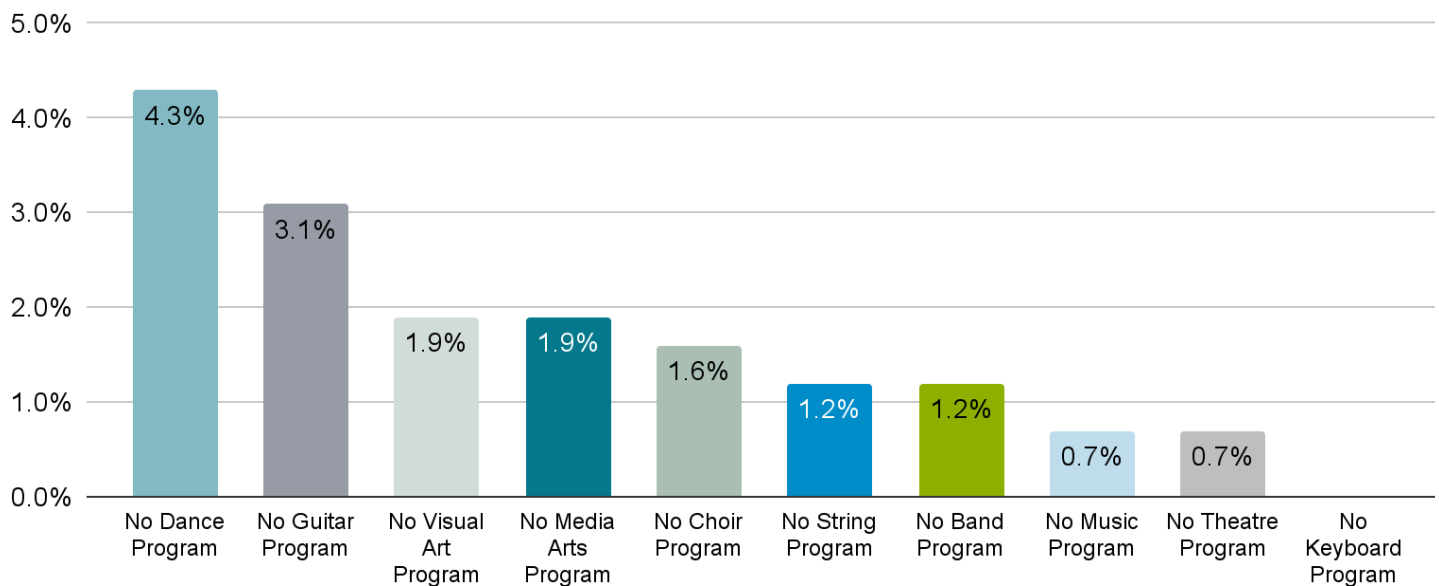
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Fifty-two percent (52%) of districts have a gap in K–12 sequential instruction for one or more arts programs. Additionally, 70% of districts have one or more high schools lacking a feeder middle school program to support respective high school programs, which prohibits students from engaging with the artistic disciplines at a younger age. Additionally, the absence of arts programs in schools often results in access barriers for specific student populations, such as those with special education needs, English language learners, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and students from certain ethnic backgrounds.

### Gaps in K–12 Sequential Learning - Secondary Only

K–12 sequential learning gaps occur when students attend a school that offers a specific arts program and then are promoted to a school that does not offer this same programming.

Schools lacking an arts program resulting in a sequential learning gap for students:



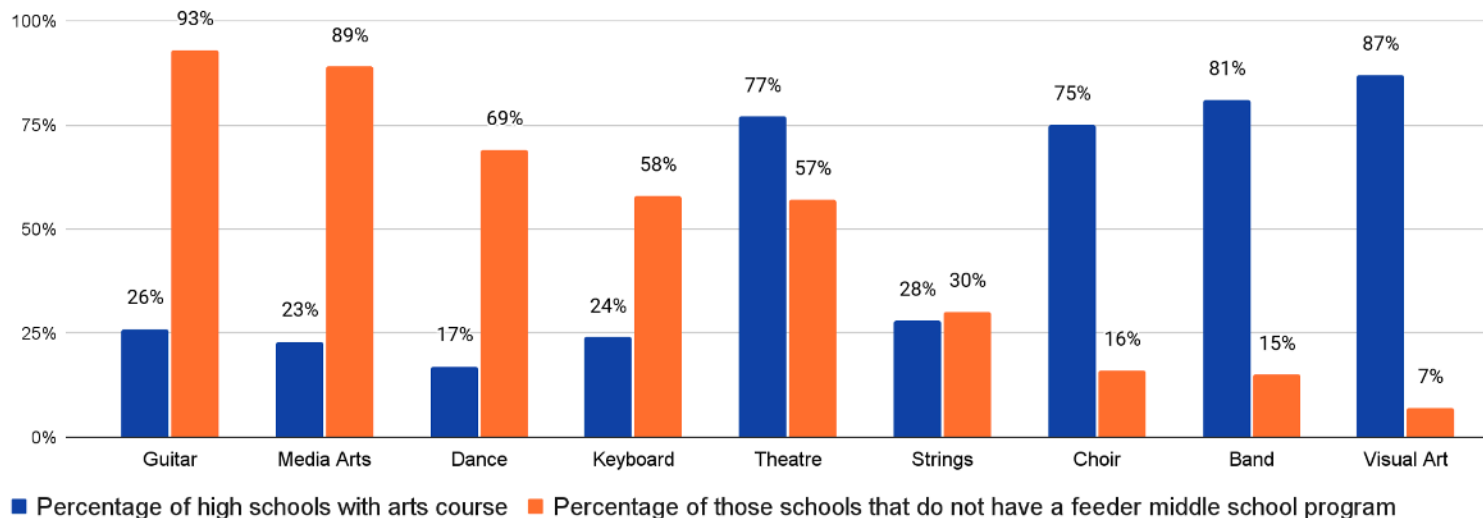
### Observations

- **Dance** has the **highest** percentage of schools that **feed into schools** that **do not** have dance programs.
- For **music**, **choir** has the **highest** percentage of schools that **feed into schools** that **do not** have choir programs.
- Only **2%** of schools have keyboard programs and all are offered at high schools; therefore, the possibility of a K–12 sequential learning gap does not exist for keyboard students.

## High Schools Lacking a Feeder Middle School School Program

When a visual and performing arts program is in place at a high school, it is recommended that the feeder middle school(s) also offer the same type of programming in order to support the high school program and to expose students to the art form at a younger age for the greatest impact on student learning and youth development.

**Percentage of high schools offering the given art form/music type compared to the percentage of those schools that do not have a feeder middle school program:**



### Observations:

- Of the five VAPA art forms, **media arts** has the **highest** percentage of high school programs **without a feeder middle school** followed by **dance**.
- Among music types, **guitar** has the **highest** percentage of high school programs **without a feeder middle school** followed by **piano/keyboard**.



## Key Finding

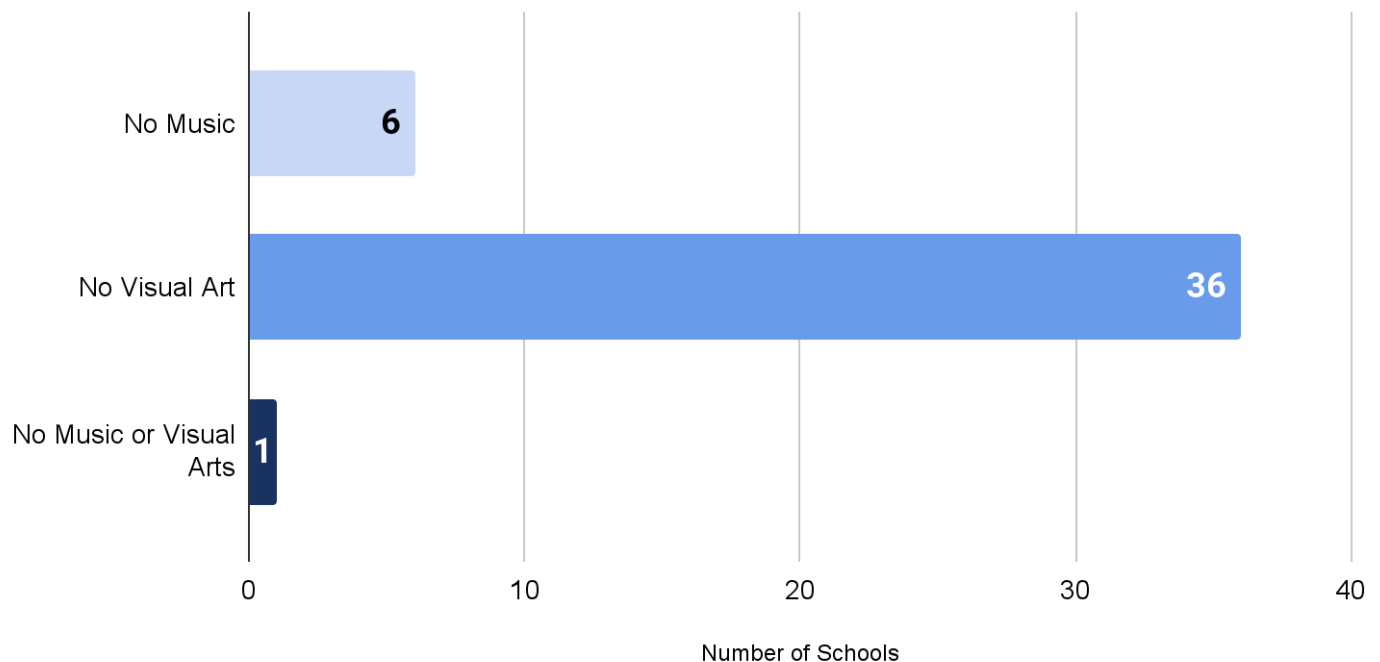
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*A number of schools appear to be out of compliance with the state's music and art education law, which highlights a significant equity concern as some students are without access to arts learning opportunities, while peers in neighboring schools or districts may have more robust arts learning opportunities and experiences.*

**Tenn. Code. Ann. § 49-6-1025** requires (“shall include”) the course of instruction in all public schools for kindergarten through grade eight (K–8) to include art and music education. Further, the code encourages local boards of education to fully implement the art and music standards adopted by the board of education through both art and music classes, as well as integration into other core academic subjects.

57% of districts participating in the study have one or more schools that appear to **be out of compliance with state code.**

43 Schools Are Out of Compliance with Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-1025



### Observations:

- District **size** and **economically disadvantaged** populations do **not** appear to impact compliance with Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-1025.
- Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-1025 does not set forth any **accountability or reporting measure** to **track** and **ensure** schools offer the required music and visual arts programming.

## Key Finding

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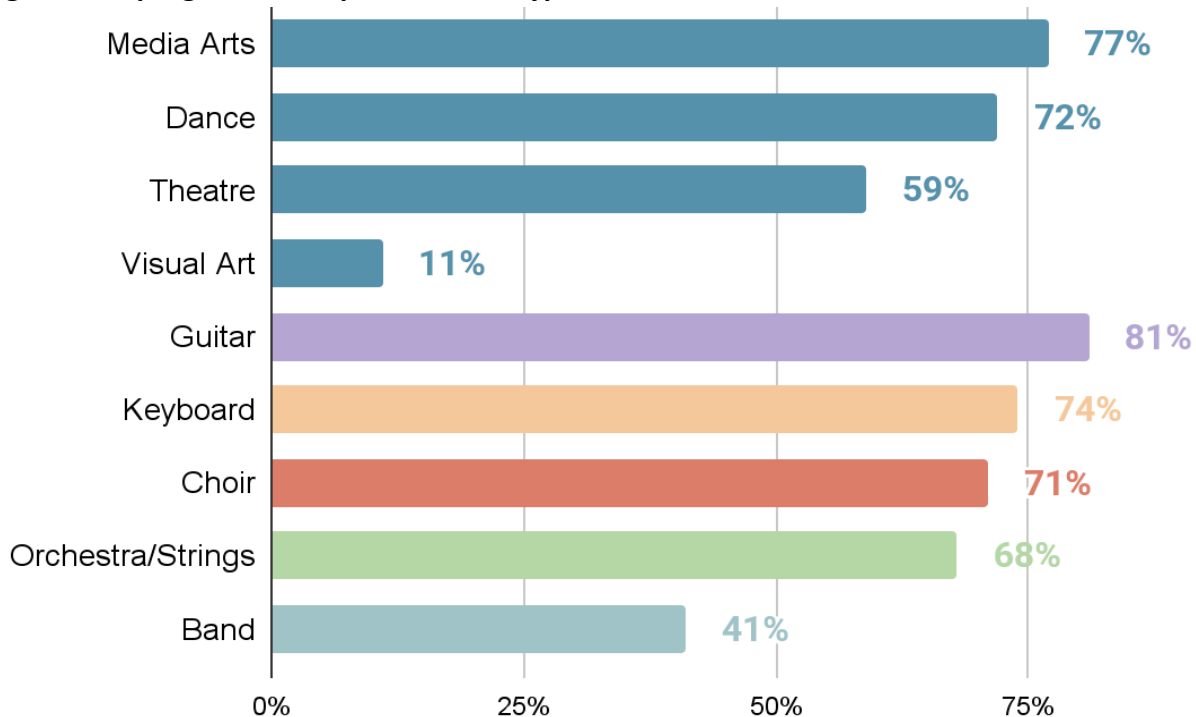
Almost 50% of districts have one or more secondary arts programs that suffer from low enrollment, and 22% of districts have low enrollment among specific student populations (e.g., SPED, ELL, socioeconomically disadvantaged, specific ethnicities, etc.), suggesting that lack of program offerings and access, participation requirements, and other enrollment barriers present challenges for students in accessing music and arts programming.

→ In the context of the State of the Arts Study/MEDSS assessments:

- 'Low enrollment' is defined as programs that serve fewer than 10% of a school's total student population. Low enrollment can be an indicator of more severe access barriers and/or one of several indicators of programs that could be at risk for elimination.
- For targeted student subgroups—such as Special Education (SPED), English Language Learners (ELL), and socioeconomically disadvantaged students—the assessments specifically look for an enrollment rate of at least 50% within these subgroups.

### Arts Programs with Low Enrollment - Secondary Only

Percentage of arts programs and specific music types with low enrollment:



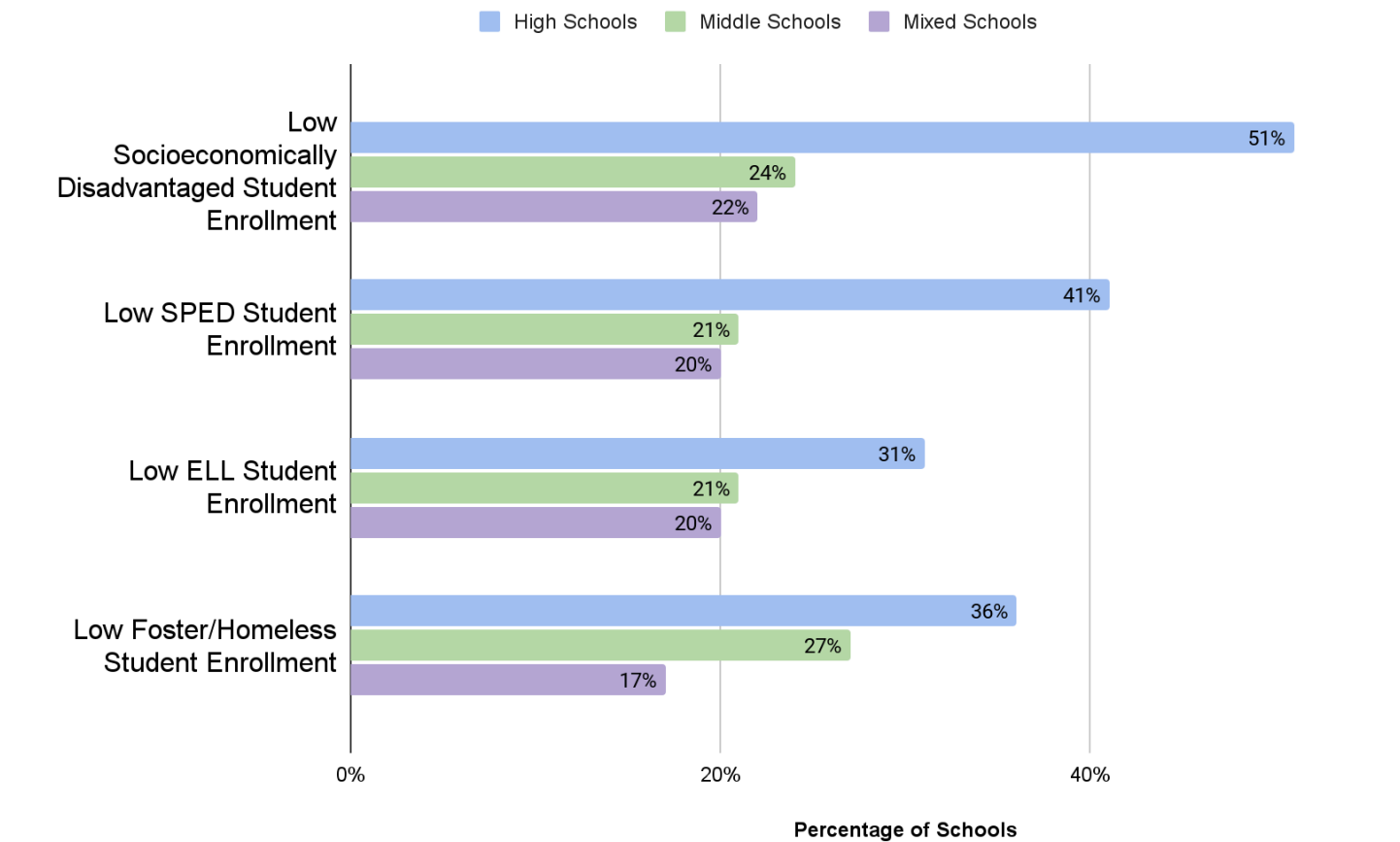
### Observations:

- The majority of **media arts**, **dance**, and **theatre** programs have **low** secondary student **enrollment**.
- With the exception of **band**, the majority of the remaining music types have **low** secondary student **enrollment**.

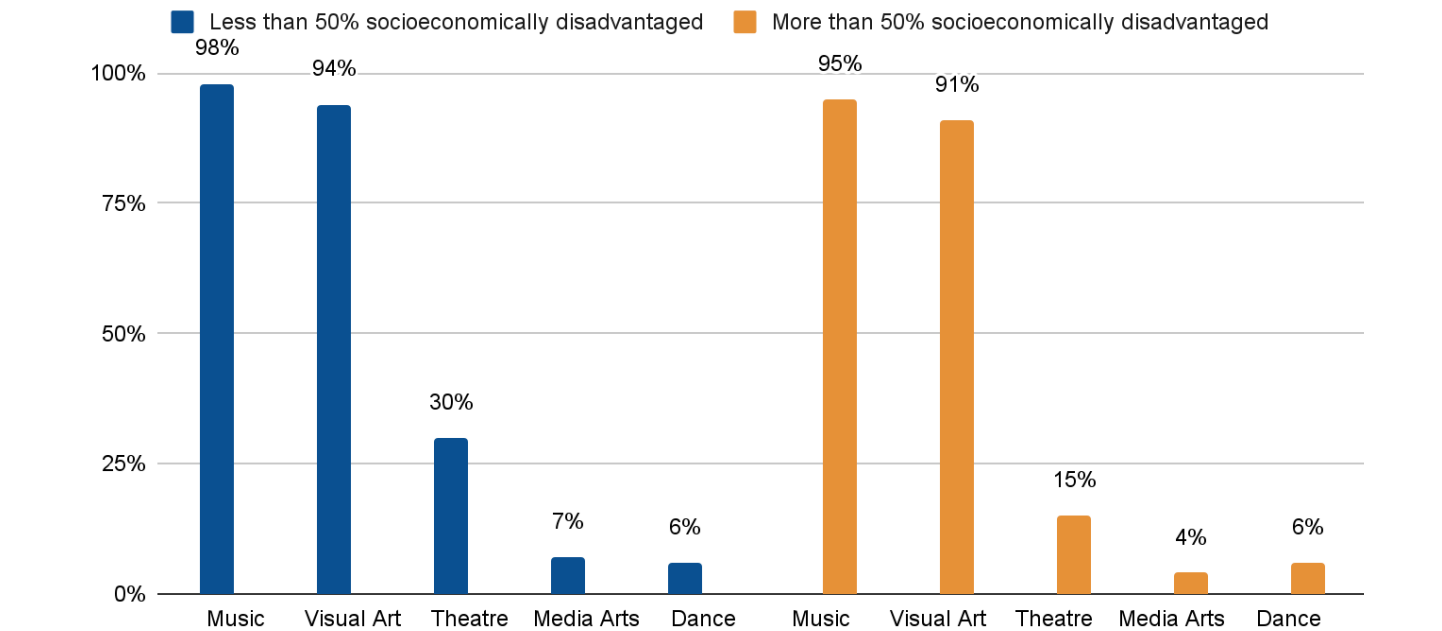


Low Arts Enrollment Among Specific Student Populations

The following chart represents percentages of schools by type with low arts enrollment among SPED, ELL, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, and Homeless/Foster students:



The following chart illustrates an economic comparison of the percentage of schools offering courses in the art form. Blue columns represent schools that serve a lesser number of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, while orange columns represent schools that serve a greater number of socioeconomically disadvantaged students.



### Observations:

- **Low** arts enrollment for the four assessed student populations occurs most predominantly at **high school** campuses.
- Of the four student populations, **low** enrollment among **socioeconomically disadvantaged** students occurs at the **largest number of schools**.
- Students attending schools that serve a **greater** number of **socioeconomically disadvantaged** students have **significantly less** access to courses in **theatre**, while access to courses in all other art forms are relatively similar.

### Participation Requirements

*The State of the Arts Study/MEDSS assessments carefully compare the district's data sets (quantitative) to the survey responses of the arts teachers (qualitative) to identify possible contributing factors for low enrollment.*

- **17%** of teachers stated there are **requirements for participation** in an arts class; however, **89%** of teachers stated that **exceptions are made** if students don't meet the program requirements.
- **Of the 17% of teachers that reported participation requirements are in place:**

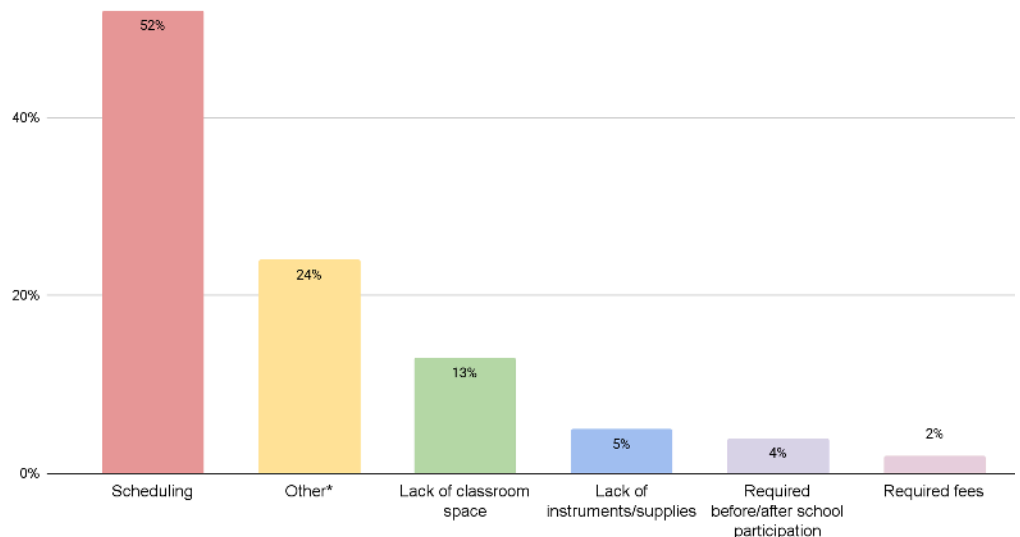
<u>% of Teachers</u>	<u>Reported Requirements:</u>
<b>32%</b>	Auditions, prerequisite courses, or portfolios
<b>26%</b>	Before and/or after school attendance requirement
<b>16%</b>	Participation fee, supply/usage fee, and/or required fundraising minimums
<b>9%</b>	Students must supply their own instruments and/or class materials
<b>2%</b>	Minimum GPA prerequisite required ( <b>average reported minimum GPA: 2.8</b> )

### Challenges and Barriers Preventing Enrollment

Teachers identified the following contributing factors as barriers preventing enrollment:

#### Observations:

**76%** of teachers stated all known, interested students are able to participate in arts classes; however, teachers identified over **13,000** students who were **unable to participate or enroll in arts classes**.



<sup>2</sup> Other: lack of recruitment, lack of arts ed teachers, graduation requirements, and discouragement from administration/community/non-arts teachers.

## Key Finding

5

A majority of visual and performing arts teachers report their programs are in need of additional resources, materials, and funding to equitably and effectively implement and sustain arts programming.

### *Resources, Equipment, and Materials Needed by Arts Teachers*

→ **61%** of arts educators report their program is **in need** of **additional materials**.

#### **Examples of Requested Resources:**

- **Dance:** Costumes, foldable mats, marley floors, mirrors, projectors, shoes, sprung floors systems, textbooks, yoga balls.
- **Media Arts:** Cameras, computers, curriculum resources, editing software, iPads, keyboards, microphones, more prep time, textbooks.
- **Music:** Adaptive instruments, boomwhackers, brass, chairs, choral risers, drums, guitars, headphones, instrument repair kits, instrument storage, larger classrooms, lighting, method books/textbooks, Orff instruments, pianos/keyboards, percussion, sheet music, sound panels, sound systems, stands, string instruments, uniforms, woodwinds.
- **Theatre:** Curtains, cyclorama, editing software, lighting/sound, makeup, microphone, rehearsal space, scripts/copyrights, set design, stagecraft, ticketing software, tools for set construction, writing software.
- **Visual Arts:** Aprons, cameras, clay, computers/tablets, darkrooms, display cases/panels, drawing tools, drying racks, easels, fiber arts materials, gelli plates, glue/tape, hand molds, ink, kilns, locked storage, painting tools, paints, paper, pottery wheels, sculpting tools, sinks, sketchbooks, smart boards, textbooks.

CONTENT AREA	Dance	Media Arts	Music	Theatre	Visual Arts
ESTIMATED COST	\$100,600	\$119,200	\$18,780,620	\$2,808,300	\$19,819,717

Total estimated cost of needed  
arts program resources:  
**\$41,628,437**

## Resources Needed to Support the Needs of SPED and ELL Students

### → Teachers identified the following resources needed to support SPED students in arts classes:

- Access to students Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
- Adaptive musical instruments and art supplies
- Better communication with SPED teachers and/or school/district SPED departments
- Paraprofessionals
- Professional learning/training opportunities
- Sensory tools
- Smaller class sizes

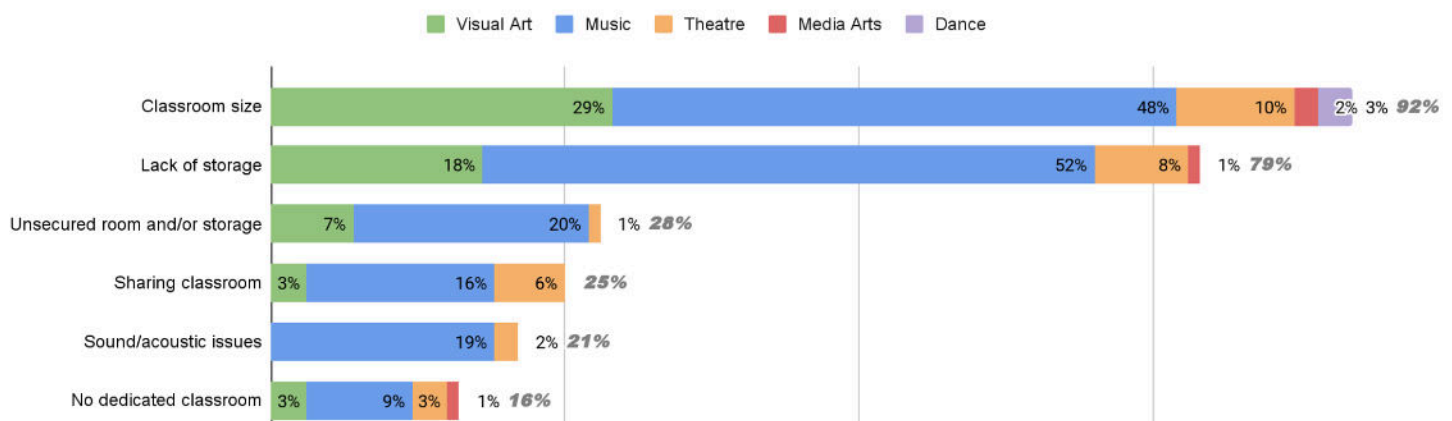
### → Teachers identified the following resources needed to support ELL students in arts classes:

- Bilingual classroom materials
- Better communication with ELL teachers and/or school/district ELL departments
- Cultural training
- Implicit bias training
- Interpreters
- Language classes for arts teachers
- Smaller class sizes
- Translation software

## Facilities Challenges - Secondary Only

→ **28%** of teachers reported issues with their classroom space that impact student learning. 18% indicated a lack of a safe, secure area to store classroom supplies.

The following chart represents the top facilities challenges as reported by teachers:



### Observations:

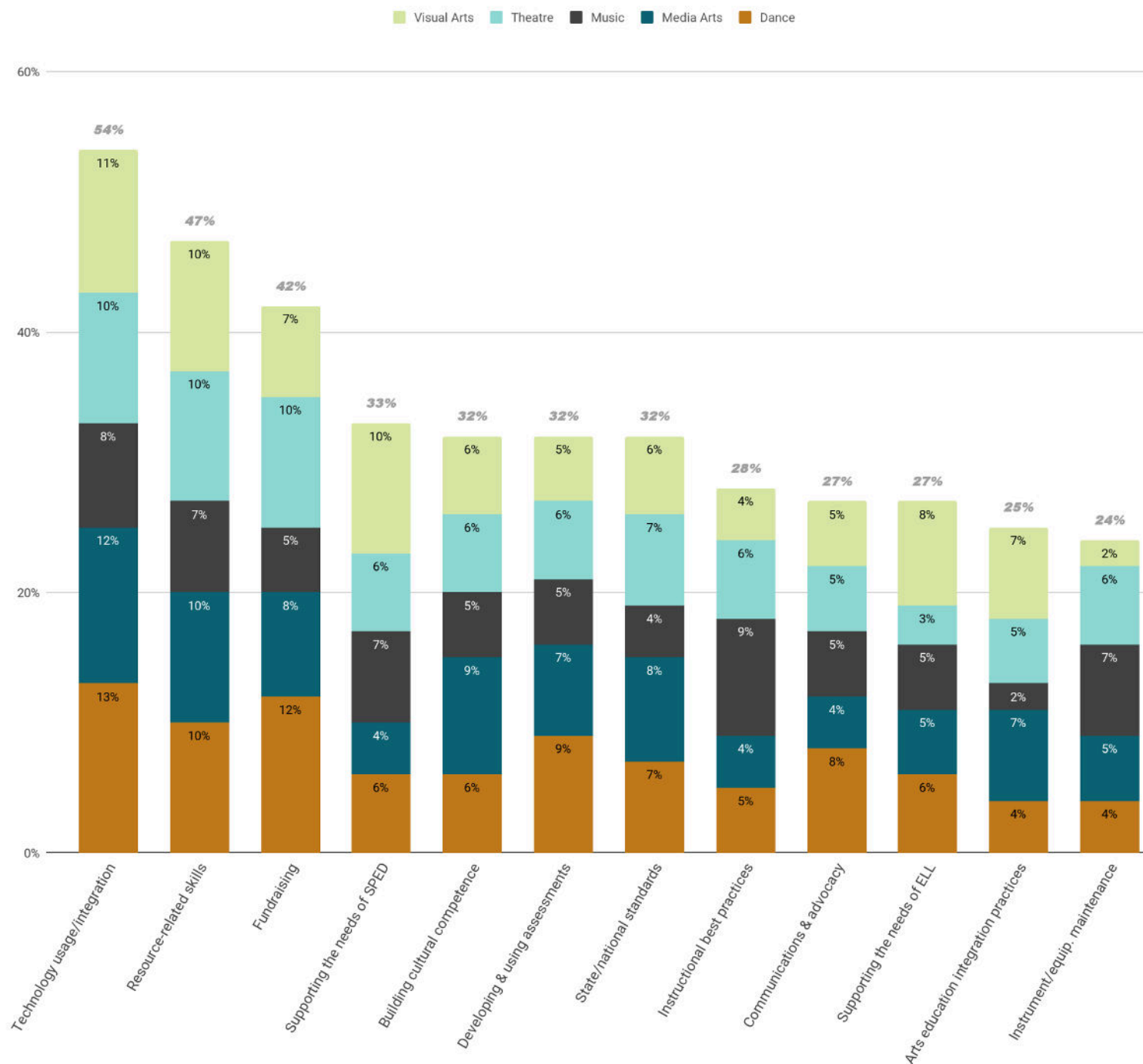
→ A **striking majority (92%)** of teachers report **inadequate classroom sizes** and a **lack of storage** to appropriately serve students. Additionally, **16%** of teachers report having **no dedicated arts classroom space**, requiring teachers to **share** classroom space with other arts programs or unrelated subject areas.



## Professional Learning Needs of Arts Teachers

- While **87%** of districts appear to offer **in-district professional learning opportunities** for arts educators, **98%** of teachers report participating in those opportunities, and **79%** seek out and attend additional external professional learning opportunities.
  - Teachers identified timing, no available substitutes, lack of release time, conflicting responsibilities, and high registration costs as **barriers** to accessing professional learning opportunities.

Teachers identified the following topics to be among the greatest areas of need for professional learning:



## District Success Stories and Impact

After the presentation of the State of the Arts Study/MEDSS™ findings and recommendations, the participating districts, with guidance from the Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation, were encouraged to adopt effective strategies to tackle the issues identified and to make strategic investments in programs, staff, and resources, thereby enhancing access to music and arts education programs.

MHOF has collaborated with school districts across Tennessee committed to leveraging the State of the Arts Study/MEDSS findings to bolster their music and arts programs and have granted musical instruments and equipment supported by MEDSS findings to more than **60** schools. Thanks to the generosity of the CMA Foundation, these critical investments in school music programs across Tennessee are valued at more than **\$1.1 million!**

The CMA Foundation, through a partnership with Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation, has **invested in musical instruments and equipment** valued at more than **\$1.1 million** to support districts that have committed to using State of the Arts Study/MEDSS™ findings to **strengthen their music and arts programs.**

### *Tennessee Bright Spots*

The following success stories represent six Tennessee districts that have embraced State of the Arts Study/MEDSS findings and recommendations and have made a strong commitment to implementing promising practices and strategic investments to strengthen music and arts education programs.

#### ***Chester County Schools (Henderson, TN)***

The MEDSS assessment revealed a sequential gap in instruction for elementary students who were promoted to a middle school where there had not been a music program for 10 years. In response, the district hired a music teacher, MHOF donated instruments valued at approximately \$50,000 and a middle school music program was implemented. Students throughout Chester County now have access to sequential K–12 music education.

*"I cannot express enough how thankful we are for the hard work and care you have brought to little Chester County. Because of you, we have a brand new fine arts teacher and music supplies that will enhance the music education experience for our students."* - Chester Co. Music Teacher

#### ***Coffee County Schools (Manchester, TN)***

MEDSS revealed elementary teachers were stretched thin teaching across multiple campuses with restrictive and inequitable scheduling and music class frequency. The district added an elementary teacher to resolve this issue. For the first time in 20 years, the district purchased curriculum and instructional materials for the elementary music teachers as a result of needs identified by teachers through the MEDSS assessment.

Additionally, the district's middle school bands and choirs are now able to visit each elementary school to conduct a recruitment tour. MHOF is currently working with the district to identify the greatest areas of need for a grant of musical instruments and equipment.

Speaking of the district's recent discussions and prioritization of music and the arts, a Coffee County music teacher/central office liaison remarked, *"I'm just glad the questions are finally being asked and I completely believe that has to do with MHOF's MEDSS assessment of our district because it opened so many eyes."*

### ***Metro Nashville Public Schools (Nashville, TN)***

*The State of the Arts Study represents the district's second MEDSS assessment. The following represent achievements as a result of MNPS's first MEDSS assessment:* After learning that the string inventory was not accounted for in the centralized inventory platform, string instruments were added. 57 schools (35 elementary, 18 middle and 4 high schools) were identified as having instruments that are not related to the type of music programming offered, the arts department prioritized visiting those schools to assess inventory, meet with teachers, and provide support in the repairing, surplusage, or reallocation of instruments. MEDSS results were used by the arts department to advocate for \$4 MM of ESSER funds, a portion of which were allocated to implement string programs in schools where MEDSS identified a sequential gap in K–12 programming. Currently, in partnership with MHOF, the district is working to prioritize findings and recommendations from this most recent MEDSS assessment to address existing gaps in K–12 sequential programming for students.

### ***Robertson County Schools (Springfield, TN)***

The Robertson County arts department utilized MEDSS findings and recommendations to support a recurring district general fund allocation of \$70,000 to fund instruments, equipment, and instructional needs, curriculum, and funding districtwide events, as well as allocating over \$18,000 in Federal Title I funds to strengthen the music and arts program at a middle school. Additionally, the arts department used findings to advocate for \$115,000 of ESSER relief funding for instruments, instructional materials, interventions for learning loss, and instructional technology. MHOF is currently working with the district to identify the greatest areas of need for a grant of musical instruments and equipment.

### ***Rutherford County Schools (Murfreesboro, TN)***

MEDSS revealed that English Language Learner (ELL) students were not enrolled in music across several middle schools throughout the district. The district identified it was due to intervention classes taking place at the same time as music. Through leveraging a grant of instruments valued at over \$20,000, MHOF worked with the teachers and principal at one of the district's middle schools, who prioritized adding an extra class period so ELL students can participate in music. Additionally, MHOF granted musical instruments and equipment valued at almost \$187,000 to support the district's music programs across six high schools.

*"The MEDSS assessment gave us rich, quantifiable data to illustrate the current state of our arts programs and point us toward priorities for the coming years. The results were incredibly valuable when updating our strategic plan for arts education,"* said Lindsay Halford, Fine Arts Coordinator for Rutherford County Schools. *"The MEDSS/CMAF grants will allow us to be strategic with our resources and ensure maximum impact...[and] have provided much-needed relief in the purchasing of large, expensive instruments that are*

*needed for quality programs. This will allow us to invest more resources over the next few years toward priorities we have identified through our MEDSS results, such as intentionally providing support to ensure economically disadvantaged students have equitable access to music and arts education.”*

### ***Tullahoma City Schools (Tullahoma, TN)***

The district committed \$50,000 towards the purchase of instruments and art materials. Additionally, the district identified why they were incorrectly tracking student enrollment that was leading to incorrect reporting for ELL, economically disadvantaged and media arts students enrolled in the arts and resolved the issue. The district is working to supply all of the resources teachers identified to support English Language Learners and Special Education students in the classroom (i.e. access to IEPs, relevant professional development, assistive technology, culturally-diverse lesson planning, etc.). Further, the district is committed to addressing a lack of performance facilities by collaborating with local partners that they feel can provide these spaces. Additionally, the district has committed to providing professional learning requested by arts teachers. Lastly, the district has committed to implementing a centralized inventory system for music and arts equipment. Through the generosity of the CMA Foundation, MHOF granted musical instruments and equipment valued at almost \$98,000 to support the district’s music programs across seven schools.

District fine arts coordinator and music teacher Atticus Hensley said, *“Thank you for the hands-on approach from MHOF...through MEDSS you have made our district feel like a partner in a journey of discovery about ourselves.”*





# Recommendations

The key recommendations emphasize the importance of providing equitable, sequential, and sustainable access to quality music and arts education programs, along with boosting student participation. These recommendations urge district leaders to make data-informed decisions, including consideration of State of the Arts Study/MEDSS findings and gathering feedback from teachers, that prioritize student needs.

Every public school student in Tennessee deserves **access** to quality, sequential, and year-long **music and arts learning opportunities** delivered by arts educators during the regular school day.

## Educators

### 1. Program Accessibility:

- Review and improve programmatic offerings to cater to diverse and evolving student needs.
- Collaborate with school administrators and guidance counselors to ensure equitable program accessibility among all student populations (ED, SPED, ELL, homeless/foster, etc.).

### 2. Professional Learning:

- Take advantage of content-specific professional learning within your district.
- Explore external learning opportunities offered by local, regional, statewide, and national organizations.

### 3. Relationships:

- Strengthen relationships with school administrators, faculty, parents, and the community.
- Establish a relationship with district-level administrators, including the district arts director/coordinator, if one exists, and frequently share updates, successes, and challenges to strengthen transparency and trust.
- Collaborate regularly with peer teachers both within the school cluster/feeder pattern and across the district to encourage mutual support of programs, share curriculum ideas/vertical planning, aid in student recruitment efforts, etc.
- Advocate for the importance of arts education and the resources it requires, such as funding, staffing, and dedicated facilities.

### 4. Partnerships:

- Pursue collaborative opportunities and support from organizations at various levels (local to national).
- Seek grants and other funding opportunities to expand arts access and enhance the curriculum.

## School and District Administrators

*This group includes superintendents, district-level administrators, visual and performing arts curriculum supervisors, school principals, and other school administrators.*

### 1. For Districts Participating in the State of the Arts Study:

- Review your district's findings and recommendations from the State of the Arts Study and present them to key decision-makers, such as district leaders, local board of education, etc.

- Engage stakeholders to develop and prioritize action plans and commit to sharing key findings with the school community (principals, teachers, parents, etc.).
- Share feeder pattern charts and detailed findings with school principals to aid in programmatic decisions and identify priority areas for improvement.
- Distribute feeder pattern charts and enrollment analyses to arts teachers to support program reflection and planning both vertically within school clusters and horizontally across similar programs district-wide, ensuring curriculum alignment and consistency for students.
- Provide teacher survey feedback to educators to enhance buy-in and commitment to the MEDSS process (Metrics, Evidence, Data, Standards, Support).
- Convene groups including teachers, parents, community partners, and students to formulate a district strategic arts plan. Specifically, develop a plan to address the State of the Arts key findings.
- Consider conducting a second/regular district-wide arts assessments (like MEDSS) or similar needs audits as an evaluation tool and to track trends and changes in arts programming across the district.

## **2. For Districts Not Participating in the State of the Arts Study:**

- Conduct regular district-wide arts assessments (like MEDSS) or similar needs audits to focus on ensuring student access to arts education programs and enhancing arts learning opportunities.
- Examine programs to benchmark against the Opportunity to Learn (OTL) Standards developed by the national professional learning and service organizations (NDEO, NAMAe, NafME, EdTA, and NAEA), establishing baselines for essential conditions to fulfill arts education standards and ensure all students can achieve artistic literacy.

## **3. Funding and Resources:**

- Establish recurring funding mechanisms within the district's general budget for arts programs.
- Allocate federal funding streams, including Title I, II, and IV, for enhancing student arts learning and teacher professional learning/development.
- Share State of the Arts Study/MEDSS assessment results with district Federal programs or development/grants offices to inform grant applications and fundraising activities.
- Implement district-wide centralized inventory system for musical instruments and other high-value arts equipment to track condition, maintenance, and longevity, and to ensure appropriate documentation for insurance, thereby protecting critical district investments.

## **4. Administrative, Programmatic, and Curriculum Support:**

- Hire or sustain district-level arts director/coordinator positions to provide content-specific expertise and guidance to arts educators, including curriculum development and implementation, professional learning, and coordinating district wide initiatives and partnerships. For smaller districts or those with limited capacity, consider forming partnerships with neighboring districts to share arts administrators.

## **5. Partnerships and Networking**

- Develop partnerships with community arts education and interest organizations to enrich student learning experiences and bolster school arts programs.
- Coordinate action plans, aligned with district strategic arts plans and/or State of the Arts Study/MEDSS findings, with external organizations to consider appropriateness, alignment, and

sustainability. This strategic alignment of resources and actions will ensure that the work of external organizations is constructive and supportive of a district wide strategy.

- Form networks with other school districts to share challenges, promising practices, and resources, such as for teacher professional learning/development and collaborative opportunities for students.

## **Polymakers**

*This group includes state-level leaders, such as the Governor, Commissioner of Education, Relative Executive Branch Departments, Members of the General Assembly, the State Board of Education, Local Boards of Education, and other county/city or other municipal governing bodies.*

### **1. Comprehensive Policies and Equitable Funding:**

- Focus on developing comprehensive policies that ensure access to music and arts education for all students.
- Dedicate sustainable funding from local, state, and federal sources to provide necessary resources, support educator recruitment and retention, and improve infrastructure for music and arts programs, especially in underprivileged areas.
- Integrate music and arts education into broader educational initiatives to underscore its role in enhancing creativity, critical thinking, and overall student development.

### **2. Standards and Accountability:**

- Ensure the quality and effectiveness of music and arts education by setting clear standards and accountability measures.
- Maintain compliance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), including prioritization of music and the arts as a well-rounded subject area.
- Conduct or commission regular statewide assessments (like the State of the Arts Study/MEDSS Assessment) to examine the conditions of school arts programs and to inform policy making and accountability aligned with state standards.

### **3. Supporting and Developing Educators:**

- Implement comprehensive initiatives focused on continuous support and professional learning/development for educators throughout and at all stages of their careers.
- Invest in educator preparation programs and ongoing professional learning to enhance the effectiveness and well-being of music and arts teachers.
- Provide resources for mental health and well-being, incentives, mentorship programs, and opportunities for professional growth and advancement.

### **4. Fostering Partnerships:**

- Encourage partnerships between schools, music and arts organizations, community groups, and other stakeholders to increase access to music and arts education.
- Promote cross-sector collaboration to pool resources, share best practices, and develop innovative approaches.

# Music (and Arts) District Support Services (MEDSS)™

Through analysis of district-provided data and insightful teacher surveys, MEDSS utilizes a mixed-methods assessment approach to explain the **why** behind music and arts education data and addresses every student and school's story, providing school districts with an extensive descriptive analysis of the state of arts education programs within the district, and customized recommendations that empower districts to **strategically implement solutions** to

"Thank you for the hands-on approach from MHOF...through MEDSS™ you have made our district feel like a **partner** in a **journey of discovery about ourselves.**"

—District Arts Supervisor

strengthen student access to quality, equitable, sequential and sustainable music and arts education.

MEDSS recommendations encourage districts to **implement data-driven solutions** that prioritize establishing new programs; eliminating gaps in K–12 sequential programming; reducing the barriers preventing equitable student access and participation; identifying the quantity and types of resources or monetary support needed to make informed, targeted investments; and curating community-specific data to support advocacy efforts.



## About the CMA Foundation

Established in 2011 as the philanthropic arm of the Country Music Association (CMA), the [CMA Foundation](#) is committed to improving and sustaining high-quality music education programs across the United States, working to ensure every child has the opportunity to participate in music. Through strategic partnerships, professional development and grant distribution, the CMA Foundation, a nonprofit 501(c)(3), invests various resources across the national public school system, after school programs, summer camps and community outreach organizations.

## About the Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation

The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation (MHOF) keeps music alive in schools across the country by providing vital support services to school districts, and new musical instruments to underfunded music programs nationwide, giving under-represented youth access to the many benefits of music education, leading them to success in school and inspiring creativity and expression through playing music. Since its founding in 1996 the organization has donated more than \$33 million worth of instruments to over 1,800 schools. More information is available at [MHOpus.org](#).

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