NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
Gifted Children

POSITION PAPER

FINE ARTS EDUCATION

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) periodically issues policy statements that deal with issues, policies, and practices that have an impact on the education of gifted and talented students. Policy statements represent the official convictions of the organization.

All policy statements approved by the NAGC Board of Directors are consistent with the organization's belief that education in a democracy must respect the uniqueness of all individuals, the broad range of cultural diversity present in our society, and the similarities and differences in learning characteristics that can be found within any group of students. NAGC is fully committed to national goals that advocate both excellence and equity for all students, and we believe that the best way to achieve these goals is through *differentiated* educational opportunities, resources, and encouragement for all students.

Frequently, when school resources are limited, arts education funding is reduced or eliminated. Proponents of such cuts defend the action by referring to the arts as a valuable but non-essential element of an educational program designed primarily to develop basic skills. NAGC maintains that arts education is fundamental to an excellent basic education for all students and to an appropriately challenging curriculum for gifted students.

Arts education generally provides learning experiences through the art forms of music, visual art, theater, and dance. These experiences develop within students understandings of key arts principles of

- **history**—with abilities to inquire into the contributions artists and art make to society and culture
- **criticism**—with abilities to make judgments about qualities and properties found in art forms
- **aesthetics**—with abilities to make personal and sound decisions about works of art, and
- **production**—with abilities to participate in the arts and to produce personal works of art with skill and creativity

The goal of arts education is to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to understand and communicate clearly within their personal, community, and cultural environments. Schools with well-supported arts education also often report enhanced reading, writing, and math skills; improved critical and creative thinking; and increased commitment to learning, and heightened multicultural understanding.

Arts education can benefit artistically gifted students by introducing them to the multiple possibilities for expression with the arts, educating them in the skills of perception, production, and performance, and opening gateways to the various career paths in the arts. As well, arts education can benefit academically gifted students by increasing the complexity and rigor of the curriculum, promoting extensive use of a variety of problem-solving strategies, heightening student motivation to pursue a topic of interest in depth, and developing rich skills in communicating with varied audiences.

NAGC supports the principle that arts education is an essential component of a sound program leading to the achievement of fundamental educational goals. Further, NAGC encourages the identification of and provision of services for artistically gifted students, as well as the integration of fine arts education into programs for the gifted for the benefit of academically gifted students.

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