

GUIDE

Advocating for the Arts: How to Talk to Your Administration

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INTRODUCTION

Making the Case for Arts Education

As an advocate for the arts, it can be a challenging task to convince your school or organization's administration to support your arts programs. The importance of the arts in education is often undervalued, and funding for these programs is frequently cut in favor of other subjects. However, there is a way to approach these discussions with a more data-driven and informed perspective.

In this guide, we will explore why it can be challenging to talk to your administration about supporting arts programs, but also how the following information can help you back your beliefs with hard data and key talking points. By understanding the benefits of arts education and having the data to support your arguments, you can make a more compelling case for why your arts programs deserve support.





1 The Benefits for the Community

The collective and individual benefits of theatre within schools are inextricably linked. Theatre is a powerful tool for not only enriching the lives of individual students, but also for strengthening and benefiting the wider community.



Community Benefits



BUILDING BRIDGES

Community members of all ages and backgrounds can participate in and enjoy theatre, creating a sense of unity and shared purpose. By bringing together diverse groups of people, theatre promotes empathy and understanding across differences.



STRONGER MOTIVATION TO ATTEND SCHOOL

When more students feel engaged in specific aspects of their curriculum, they will attend class more regularly. If your student body has better attendance as a whole, this will lead to stronger test scores, more engagement in after-school activities, and higher graduation rates. Win-win-win!



DEMONSTRATING INCLUSION

Whether students are at-risk, shy, or just looking for a new hobby, theatre is a place where inclusion is created. If more students within a school community feel welcomed and safe, the health of the school as a whole will improve.



CULTURAL ENRICHMENT

Theatre undoubtedly brings a different level of cultural enrichment to a student body. This, in turn, advances general empathy towards different cultures and expands creativity within the student body.



GREATER SOCIAL AWARENESS

Self-empowerment and a strong awareness of social issues around the world can be the result of community and school theatre. It grants insights into new perspectives and leads to constructive conversations about how we can make an impact on the world for the better. All schools should aim to cultivate a socially aware, empathic student body – and theatre helps to get you there.

2 Fostering Well-Rounded Students

Theatre is not just about entertainment. It also creates a positive impact on the academic development of students. Encourage your administrators to see the value of theatre in education and the many ways it can contribute to other subjects in the classroom, including increased participation!



Benefits Beyond the *Theatre* Classroom

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Theatre involves reading and analyzing scripts, which can improve students' reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. It also involves storytelling, which fosters creativity and enhances creative writing abilities.

SCIENCE AND DESIGN

Theatre productions often require students to design and construct sets, costumes, and props. This can involve many aspects from understanding the properties of materials and the principles of light and sound to the architecture and engineering of sets.

WORLD HISTORY

Many playwrights explore historical and cultural contexts, which provides opportunities for students to gain a deeper understanding of historical events and their impact on society. By playing characters in history, students can have hands-on experiences that will keep them engaged and receptive.

MATHEMATICS

Productions often involve budgeting and financial planning, which helps to improve students' math skills, especially for those in higher levels of education. They may also need to calculate measurements and proportions when designing sets and costumes, which can enhance the math skills of younger groups.



 **Pro Tip**

Involve your students in the marketing and business side of theatre! With On The Stage, you can add Junior Accounts at no extra cost to teach your students how to promote their productions, grow their audience, manage ticket sales, track budgets, and much more.

3 Setting Students up for Success

Soft skills are crucial to securing a job after graduation. Theatre programming, with its hands-on and collaborative nature, teaches students these skills far more than other types of education, and can work to augment their main curriculum.

As Patricia Rain said at the 2017 EDTA Conference, "Only 15% of job success comes from technical skills and knowledge. The other 85% comes from well-developed soft-skills, things like the ability to listen, artistic sense, nonverbal communication, enthusiasm, and storytelling. Isn't this the focus of theatre?"



Career Readiness

Administrators love to talk about college and career readiness, and you should too! Giving students the tools to succeed isn't limited to the main curriculum. Bring up these key points when talking to your administration:

TIME MANAGEMENT

Theatre requires a significant time commitment, including rehearsals, performances, and behind-the-scenes work. Students learn to manage their time effectively and prioritize their responsibilities, which is important in any career.

LEADERSHIP

Theatre often involves leadership roles, such as directing or producing. Students learn to take charge, make decisions, and inspire others, which are essential skills in any leadership position.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Theatre involves performing in front of an audience, which helps to develop presentation skills, including body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions. These are valuable skills to acquire and are applicable to almost any career.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Theatre often involves portraying intense emotions and requires students to regulate their own emotions. By participating in theatre, students often learn to manage their emotions effectively, work well with various personalities, and navigate high-stress situations, which are all valuable life skills applicable to any career.

ADAPTABILITY

Theatre often involves unexpected changes and last-minute adjustments. Students learn to adapt quickly to new situations and remain flexible in the face of challenges.

"My school and I are in total awe of your company. I am so grateful for the professional development support and for your truly life changing platform for ticket sales, programs, merchandise. I will never do another show without you!"

Lauren Warner
Bromley East Carter School

4 Backed By Facts: The Data

It can be difficult to communicate the value of theatre education in a way that resonates with administrators who are likely focused on academic achievement and standardized testing. In this section, let's explore data points that may be helpful in your approach.

"What's the actual data?"

- *Your Administrator, Most Likely*



STRONGER ACADEMIC SKILLS

Individual students who participate in the arts often have strong academic prowess than those who don't. The College Entrance Examination Board reported staggering findings from 2004-2011, as it relates to students involved in the arts:

- Students involved in drama performance scored an average of 65.5 points higher on the verbal component and 35.5 points higher in the math component of the SAT;
- Students who took courses in drama study or appreciation scored, on average, 55 points higher on verbal and 26 points higher on math than their non-arts classmates;
- In 2005, students involved in drama performance outscored the national average SAT score by 35 points on the verbal portion and 24 points on the math section.



HIGHER CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The Journal of Civil Society, Leroux and Bernadska, 2019, reports that audience-based participation in the arts and personal participation in creating art are both linked to higher levels of civic engagement and social tolerance. Individual students, through their work in the theatre, are statistically more likely to participate in social justice causes due to learned empathy in their creative endeavors.



INCREASED GRADUATION RATES

Students with high levels of arts involvement are less likely to drop out of school, according to The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies, 2012. Additionally, they report that drop-out rates correlate with student levels of involvement in the arts- the more they're involved, the more likely it will be that they graduate!



From Persuasion to Action

Securing administrative support for theatre education can be a challenging but rewarding process. By highlighting the many benefits of theatre for student development, academic success, and community engagement, and by presenting a well-researched and compelling proposal, you can increase your chances of getting the funding and resources your program needs to thrive. Remember to stay positive, professional, and open to feedback, and to emphasize the unique value of theatre education in the broader context of your school's mission and goals.

With persistence and determination, you can build strong relationships with your administration and create a successful and sustainable theatre program that enriches the lives of students for years to come.

On The Stage

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