

ARTS EDUCATION

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# Benchmark Survey Summary



## Why Arts Education Matters

Aligning with the United Nations, Arts Commons believes that access to the arts is a basic human right. ([UN, Article 27](#)). Arts and education are powerful allies that empower learners of all ages to develop skills that activate curiosity and creative thinking, develop agency over self and community, and build cultural and emotional intelligence. These are critical skills for future employment ([Forbes, 2021](#)) as well as lifelong mental wellness ([Canadian Journal of Education, 2005](#)). Yet despite overwhelming research supporting these positive outcomes, many parents are not aware of these benefits. According to [The Brookings Institution](#), “A critical challenge for arts education has been a lack of empirical evidence that demonstrates its educational value” even though it is well documented “that the arts enhance civil society” ([Journal of Civil Society, 2014](#)) and “arts learning is strongly associated with higher levels of achievement, positive social and emotional development, and successful transitions into adulthood,” ([National Endowment for the Arts, 2011](#)).

## Benchmark Survey Findings Summary

Noticing a substantial lack of Canadian research in the area of public perception and attitudes towards arts education, in spring of 2022 Arts Commons, with the support of Calgary Arts Development, commissioned research consulting firm, Stone-Olafson to conduct a benchmark study in our area of Calgary, Alberta. Customized surveys were sent to three key stakeholder groups: Educators, Parents, and Arts Facilitators, including independent teaching artists, arts organizations, and both commercial and community organizations. It was our intention that by bridging the perspectives of these groups, we have a roadmap to strengthen and increase arts education resources, availability and participation in Calgary as well as throughout Alberta.



# What needs have been identified in arts education in Calgary?

WHAT PARENTS TOLD US

Parents identified their top reasons for enrolling their child into arts-related activities: they were good for their development, fun and fostered their creativity. However, a comparatively **low percentage of parents felt that the arts could support their child’s real world needs and learned skills long-term.**



**“Arts education or experiences are fine, but that’s not going to help them get/keep a job.”**

Parent



94%

Development of creative and artistic skills is a good thing



77%

Personal growth is the biggest benefit of arts education.



45%

Arts education are not going to help them get/keep a job



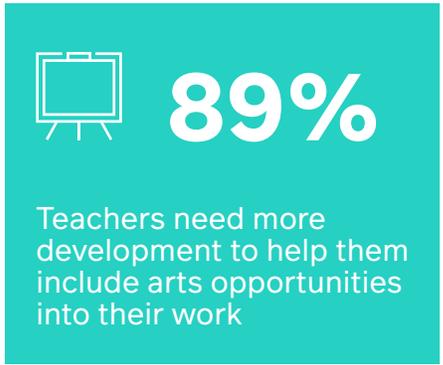
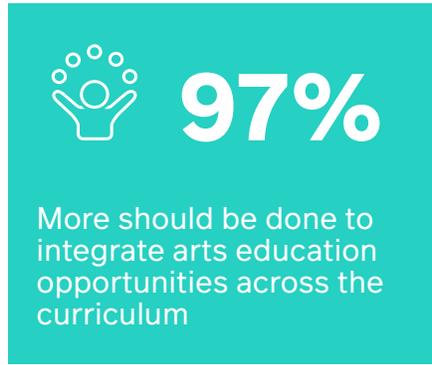
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### WHAT TEACHERS TOLD US

Teachers identified the benefits of arts education as: aiding personal growth, enabling self-expression, and exposing students to new and different ideas. A high percentage of teachers believe that **more is needed to be done to integrate the arts into curriculae** and that **teachers needed more development** to ensure arts opportunities are included into their classrooms.



***Schools are often the main point of entry for arts opportunities for students. And not only can schools offer specific instruction in the arts, but they are a key partner in connecting and exposing students to arts opportunities in the community.***

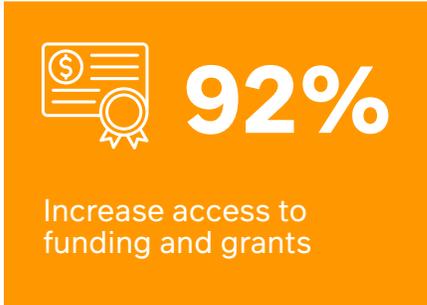
*Stone-Olafson Report*

### WHAT ARTS FACILITATORS TOLD US

Arts Facilitators identified that the key attributes to arts education are creativity, innovation, discipline, collaboration, and communication. However, a high percentage felt that there needs to be **increased collaboration between teaching artists and arts organizations, more training for staff, and increased access to funding and grants.**



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» **“More should be done to integrate arts and creation opportunities into our everyday lives.”**  
*Arts Facilitator*

All three stakeholder groups identified the need for a central hub of arts education information and opportunities.



# What are the **barriers** to arts education participation?

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### BARRIERS FOR PARENTS

Parents identified the key reasons for a lack of enrollment of their children in arts related activities as **lack of consideration, lack of awareness of opportunities,** and **lack of accessibility** either due to cost or another limiting factor.



*“Arts experiences are for other people, not really for me/my family.”*

*Parent*



**40%**

Lack of consideration



**32%**

Lack of accessibility



**13%**

Lack of awareness of opportunities



### BARRIERS FOR TEACHERS

Teachers identified the barriers they most often encounter as **cost** (to both school and students), **lack of time/resources** to organize, and lack of **awareness of available programs**.



“Even if a centralized hub was developed to assist with awareness and coordination of opportunities, things like cost, and time would need to be addressed.”

Stone-Olafson Report



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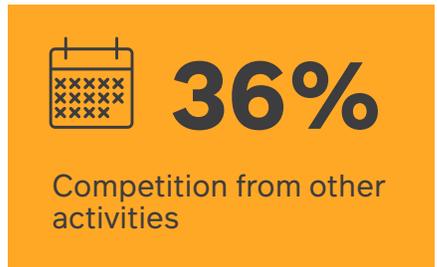
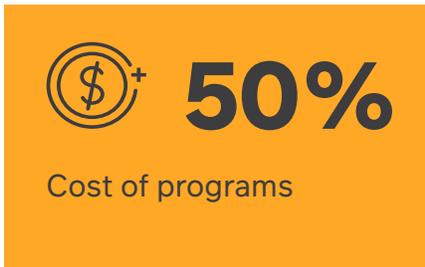
### BARRIERS FOR ARTS FACILITATORS

Arts Facilitators identified the key barriers to participation as **lack of awareness** of available programs, **cost of programs/supplies and equipment**, and **competition from other activities** in general, both due to financial limitations and time available.



*“As a self-employed artist, it is difficult to find organizations who need experts in the arts.”*

*Arts Facilitator*





**How do we  
bridge the gap  
between public  
perception and the  
established benefits  
of arts education?**

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In May of 2023, Arts Commons Education, the education arm of Arts Commons, will bring together teachers, parents, families, artists, and arts organizations for the inaugural Calgary Arts Education Festival and Summit. This week-long festival will include a world-class production for student and family audiences, workshops in schools across Calgary, activations of public spaces throughout our city, and will culminate in an Arts Education Summit open to the public. Together, the stakeholder groups engaged in our survey (parents, educators, artists) will reimagine the conversation about arts education and the critical role it plays in youth development.

In direct response to the stated lack of awareness of the positive impact of arts education across all stakeholder groups in this study, Arts Commons is uniquely situated to be the catalyst of change in our community. As the country's third largest arts centre, and driven by a collaborative team of industry experts, performing arts leaders, and exceptional teaching artists, we ensure students and teachers have immersive, engaging arts education programs in Calgary.

Within our 560,000 square foot facility in downtown Calgary, we are home to six performance venues (including the Max Bell Theatre, the Jack Singer Concert Hall, and the Martha Cohen Theatre), rehearsal studios, scene and costume shops, and six art galleries — all of which are part of the arts education experiences we offer.

Arts Commons is committed to redefining a bold and adventurous Calgary by championing and investing in creativity. Through our collective commitment to arts education, we will ignite, experience, and celebrate positive change in Calgary.

**We need to do this work together! Join us!**



Follow us on social media **@yycARTSed** or join our email list at **[artscommons.ca/newsletter](https://artscommons.ca/newsletter)** to keep up to date.

To get involved, please contact Karen Youngberg, Associate Director, Education at **[education@artscommons.ca](mailto:education@artscommons.ca)**.