

# Elementary and Secondary Education

## Request

- We urge members of Congress to support and cosponsor the Civics Secures Democracy Act, expected to be reintroduced in the House and Senate, which would invest in K-12 civic education and American history.
- Encourage all school districts, schools, and teachers to take full advantage of museums' unique human and material resources to educate and inspire students, which was especially critical during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Fully implement the “well-rounded education” provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act which include the many subject areas in which museums help teach the curricula.
- Support funding for federal education programs in which museums currently participate, including 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Assistance for Arts Education, American History and Civics, and the Magnet Schools Assistance Program.
- Support efforts to promote school-museum partnerships, including museum schools.

## Museums Are Critical Partners in Education

- Strong civic education is essential to the future of our constitutional democracy. AAM is an active member of the [CivXNow Coalition](#) and supports legislative efforts to invest in K-12 civic education.
- The Civics Secures Democracy Act is bipartisan legislation that would provide \$5 billion to fund K-12 history and civics education and programs over the next five years. If passed into law and fully funded, at least \$200 million annually would go to “qualified nonprofit organizations,” such as museums, through competitive grants to support K-12 civic education.
- Museum education programs help bridge the [digital divide](#).
- [Museums represent one of the only educational systems outside of our formal framework with the knowledge and people power to back up our teachers and parents on the front lines.](#)
- Each year, museums spend more than \$2 billion on educational programming and provide millions of hours of instruction to students and teachers, including:
  - educational programming for students
  - museum staff programs in schools
  - traveling exhibits in schools
  - pre-service teacher development
  - professional development for current teachers
  - approximately 55 million museum visits each year from school students
- Recent rigorous studies of single-visit field trips to art museums around the country found that participating students demonstrated greater knowledge of, and interest in, art, but

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also scored higher than peers in measures of critical thinking, empathy, tolerance, and comfort with multiple viewpoints about works of art.

- Facilitated classroom visits to art museums have a measurable impact on key aspects of student learning.  
The typical museum devotes three-quarters of its education budget specifically to K-12 students.
- In a 2017 survey of public opinion, [Museums and Public Opinion](#), 97 percent of Americans agreed that museums were educational assets in their communities. The results were statistically identical regardless of political persuasion or community size.
- Museums design exhibitions, educational programs, classroom kits, and online resources in coordination with state and local curriculum standards in math, science, art, literacy, language arts, history, civics and government, economics and financial literacy, geography, and social studies.
- At dozens of museum schools nationwide, K-12 students make frequent expeditionary learning visits to local partner museums and use essential museum practices—such as project-based learning and exhibit design—to blur the line between formal and informal learning.
- In recognition of the strong role museums play in K-12 education, they are expressly included in several sections of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): American History and Civics as well as Assistance for Arts Education.

### The Partnership between Museums and Schools Should Be Strengthened

- The partnership between museums and schools has served and benefited students, teachers, and communities immensely, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Many museums already participate in 21st Century Community Learning Centers and magnet and charter school programs (under the rubric of “community-based organizations”). However, museums should be expressly included as eligible entities in these programs to increase their visibility as educational institutions and ensure state and local education agencies and other key stakeholders in education are aware of their eligibility.
- School districts that establish a staff position with the responsibility of ensuring that museum resources are well utilized by students and educators have proven extremely successful.
- Budgetary constraints and an increased focus on test preparation have contributed to a decline in field trips, to the detriment of students and teachers. Inadequate funding continues to hinder schools’ ability to partner with museums.

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## Background

The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)—placed an increased focus on reading and math tests, with strong accountability provisions that led schools to focus on these two subjects at the expense of others. In a 2011 national survey, two-thirds of teachers reported that some core academic subjects were being crowded out by NCLB’s focus on math and language arts tests. Partly as a result, museum visits and instruction related to other subjects decreased.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced NCLB when it was signed into law on December 10, 2015. It governs federal education spending under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act through FY 2020. ESSA maintains a similar federal role in financing elementary and secondary education, while giving states significantly more leeway. Despite widespread efforts to eliminate programs, ESSA maintained or lightly modified many federal education programs in which museums currently participate, including 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Assistance for Arts Education, American History and Civics, and the Magnet Schools Assistance Program.