Colorado does not know how many of its children get no arts education

BONFILS STANTON FOUNDATION

The state collects no data on which schools offer arts courses or how many students take them. Other states can answer that question. Colorado cannot, which means every decision about arts learning here is made in the dark.

2.1 million

U.S. students have no arts education at all. The estimate comes from the 17 states that measure it directly. Colorado is not one of them.

164 of 187

Colorado school districts have no certified theatre teacher. Another 59 have no certified music teacher and 48 none for visual arts.

1 in 254

Colorado has roughly one licensed arts teacher for every 254 students. Credentialed arts teachers fell 5% between 2021 and 2024.

What the research shows arts learning does

Students come to school more. Boston tracked its students for over a decade. Those taking arts classes attended more, and the gain was largest for the children who miss the most school.

More of them finish school. Low-income teenagers who took few or no arts courses were five times more likely to leave high school without a diploma, 22% against 4%.

Three times more likely to earn a degree. Low-income students with intensive arts in high school, compared with their peers.

One trip changes how they think. Students picked by lottery for a single art museum visit thought more critically and showed more tolerance afterward.

Ask your legislators to START COUNTING

Colorado collects data from every school district. Add two things to it: which arts courses a school offers, and how many students take them. No mandate, almost no cost. Without it, no one can say which children are going without, or whether anything we try is working.

Find them by address at leg.colorado.gov/find-my-legislator

Sources. No-access estimate: Arts Education Data Project, 2022, for 2018-19. Colorado districts, teacher ratio and decline: The State of Arts Education in Colorado Public Schools, Think 360 Arts for Learning and Colorado Business Committee for the Arts, December 2025. Attendance: Bowen and Kisida, Educational Policy, 2024. High school completion and degree attainment: Catterall, Dumais and Hampden-Thompson, National Endowment for the Arts, 2012. Museum visit: Greene, Kisida and Bowen, 2014.