

Representative Brandt Iden, Chair

Representatives Jim Lilly, Eric Leutheuser, Beth Griffin, Roger Hauck, Bronna Kahle, Jason Wentworth, Rebekah Warren, Wendell Byrd, Sheldon Neeley, Kevin Hertel, Members

From: Jason Pratt

Date: Thursday, May 23, 2019

Subject: Opposition for HB 4269, a bill to amend 1976 PA 451, entitled "The revised school code," (MCL 380.1 to 380.1852) by adding section 1278f.

My name is Jason Pratt and I am the Michigan Representative on the Advocacy Leadership Network for the Educational Theatre Association, an elected member of the Governing Board of Directors and the Advocacy Director for the Michigan Educational Theatre Association, a member of the Fine Arts Council at Oakland Schools, the Performing Arts Center Director at Waterford Kettering High School, and a Theatre Educator for the last 12 years.

I am here today to express my opposition to HB 4269, which would remove the 1-credit Performing, Visual, and Applied Arts graduation requirement and replace it with a 3-credit 21st Century Skills requirement.

Certainly, the subjects listed within the 21st Century Skills proposal are important subjects that would help prepare our students for the world we will be sending them into. However, by lumping the Performing, Visual, and Applied Arts classes into a list of options rather than continuing to require them would have a devastating impact on arts education offerings, teacher career and programming capabilities, community engagement, and most importantly the creative and critical thinking outlet that is imperative to student growth and achievement.

The Americans for the Arts list on their website 10 facts about Arts Education:

1. A Student involved in the arts is four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement.
2. Students with high arts participation and low socioeconomic status have a 4 percent dropout rate – five times lower than their low socioeconomic status peers.
3. Students who take four years of arts and music classes average almost 100 points higher on their SAT scores than students who take only one-half year or less.
4. Low-income students who are highly engaged in the arts are twice as likely to graduate college as their peers with no arts education.
5. 72 percent of business leaders say that creativity is the number one skill they are seeking when hiring.
6. 93 percent of Americans believe that the arts are vital to providing a well-rounded education.
7. The arts are recognized as a core academic subject under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and 48 states have adopted standards for learning in the arts.
8. Two-thirds of public school teachers believe that the arts are getting crowded out of the school day.

9. 97 percent of elementary schools nationwide don't offer dance and 96 percent don't offer theatre.
10. In 2008, African-American and Hispanic students had less than half of the access to arts education than their White peers.

According to a 2011 article in the quarterly peer-reviewed academic journal, *Mind, Brain, and Education*:

- High school students engaged in actor training develop a higher level of empathy, heightened understanding of what others are thinking and feeling, and are better able to control their own positive and negative emotions.

Although the bill lists in section B that a school district or public school academy is strongly encouraged to offer visual arts and performing arts courses, in the ever-demanding world of budgetary constraints, arts offerings tend to be put on the proverbial chopping block. Grouping these courses with others will make it much easier for these programs to be cut from education in a time where we should be enhancing the creativity sought by 72 percent of business leaders. When 93 percent of Americans believe that the arts are vital to providing a well-rounded education, Michigan should not put itself at risk of diminishing those opportunities for its students.

At the 2017 Educational Theatre Association National Conference, Patricia Raun, Professor of Performance and Voice at Virginia Tech stated:

- "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 our work in theatre?"

It is for these reasons that I would encourage you to amend the bill as proposed to incorporate the various 21st Century Skills into student education separate from the current arts credit requirements. As stated above, the arts are recognized as a core academic subject under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and we should be doing everything in our power to ensure the arts remain a priority in the well-rounded education of our students.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify, and I welcome any questions from the committee.



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May 9, 2019

Michigan House of Representatives
Anderson House Office Building
124 North Capitol Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933

Hello,

I am writing on behalf of the Michigan Thespian Association, an affiliate of the Educational Theatre Association. EdTA is the national voice of theatre education, with more than 135,000 student members and 6,000 teachers.

It has come to our attention that there are currently two bills in the Michigan House of Representative—HB 4269 and HB 4270—that are proposing a revision to the state's graduation requirements. Specifically the bills are suggesting that students no longer be required to complete a 1 credit arts requirement; rather, that they be allowed to meet graduation requirements by choosing a combination of three credits in a foreign language, the arts, computer science, or CTE program. This revised curriculum fulfillment proposal is, at first glance, a reasonable idea that gives students an opportunity to pursue multiple interests that simultaneously ensure that they meet the state's 21st Century Skills requirement.

However, the bills have the potential to prompt unintended consequences regarding the availability of arts education, particularly theatre, in Michigan schools throughout the state.

Michigan has long adhered to the curricular model that includes a requirement that every student graduate with one credit in the arts. HB 4269 and 4270 puts arts programs and teachers at risk. Certainly there are robust, well-funded arts programs in secondary school throughout the state that will continue to offer a wide range of arts opportunities for their students. But for those schools where subject areas such as theatre are already marginalized, with minimal staff, resources, and financial support, there is the danger that those curricular programs will be eliminated as schools feel the pressure to meet the state's new 21st century mandate, with more emphasis on perceived practical career skills in areas such as computer science and career and technical education.

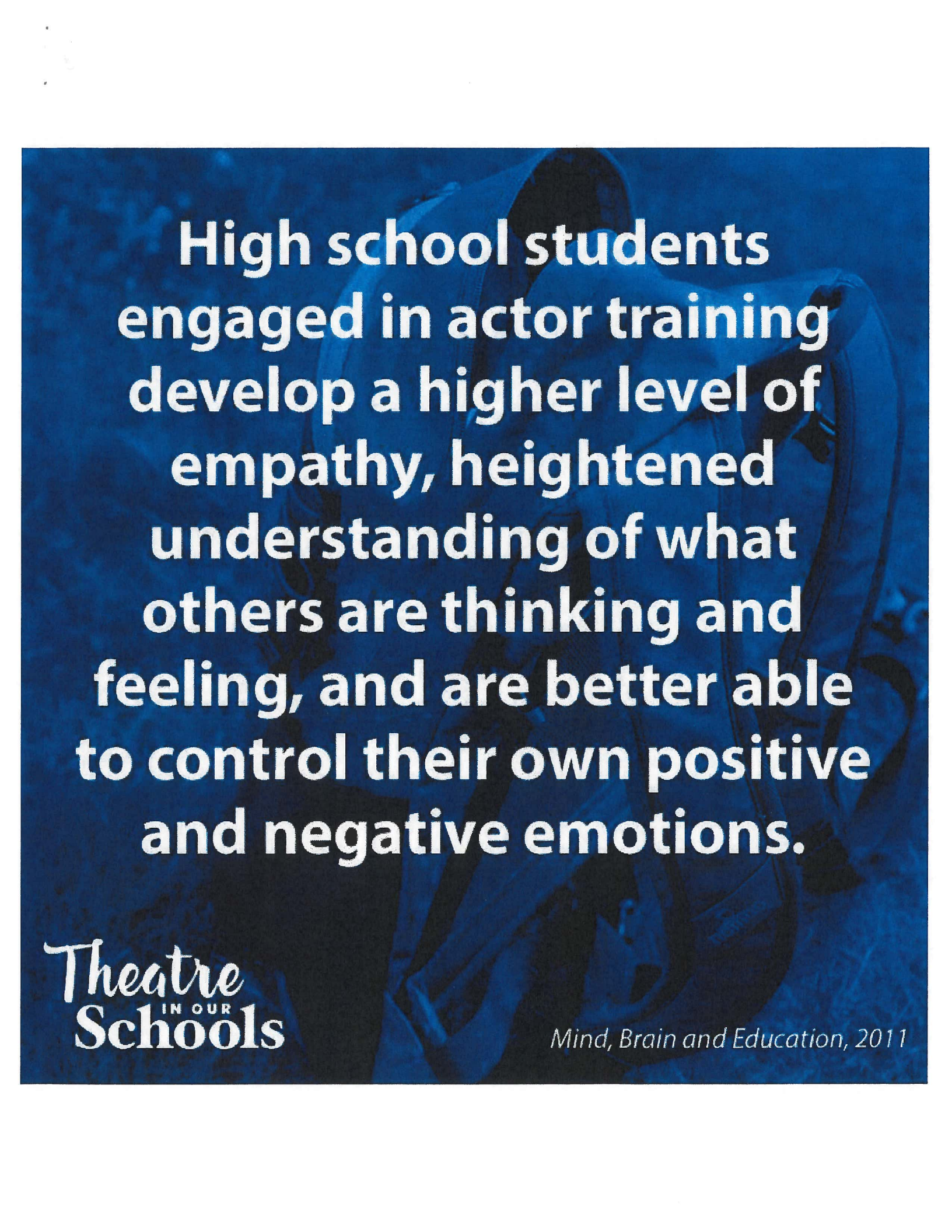
It is clear that preparing students for career and life success is at the core of Michigan's education strategy. But I would strongly urge you to reconsider your support for HB 4269 and HB 4270. The arts nurture skills and knowledge that are as important as those in Math, Science, and English. Theatre, for example, teaches leadership, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity, among many other career prep skills.

Again, I understand that these bills are well meaning, but please consider those students in schools where the arts are already at risk, particularly in high poverty schools. The national data indicates that only 28 % of all high poverty students have access to arts education opportunities. And, ironically, the data indicates that those are the students who benefit most from school-based arts experiences.

Please do the right thing and continue to support an arts graduation requirement in Michigan's students.

Sincerely,

James Palmarini
EdTA Director of Educational Policy



High school students engaged in actor training develop a higher level of empathy, heightened understanding of what others are thinking and feeling, and are better able to control their own positive and negative emotions.

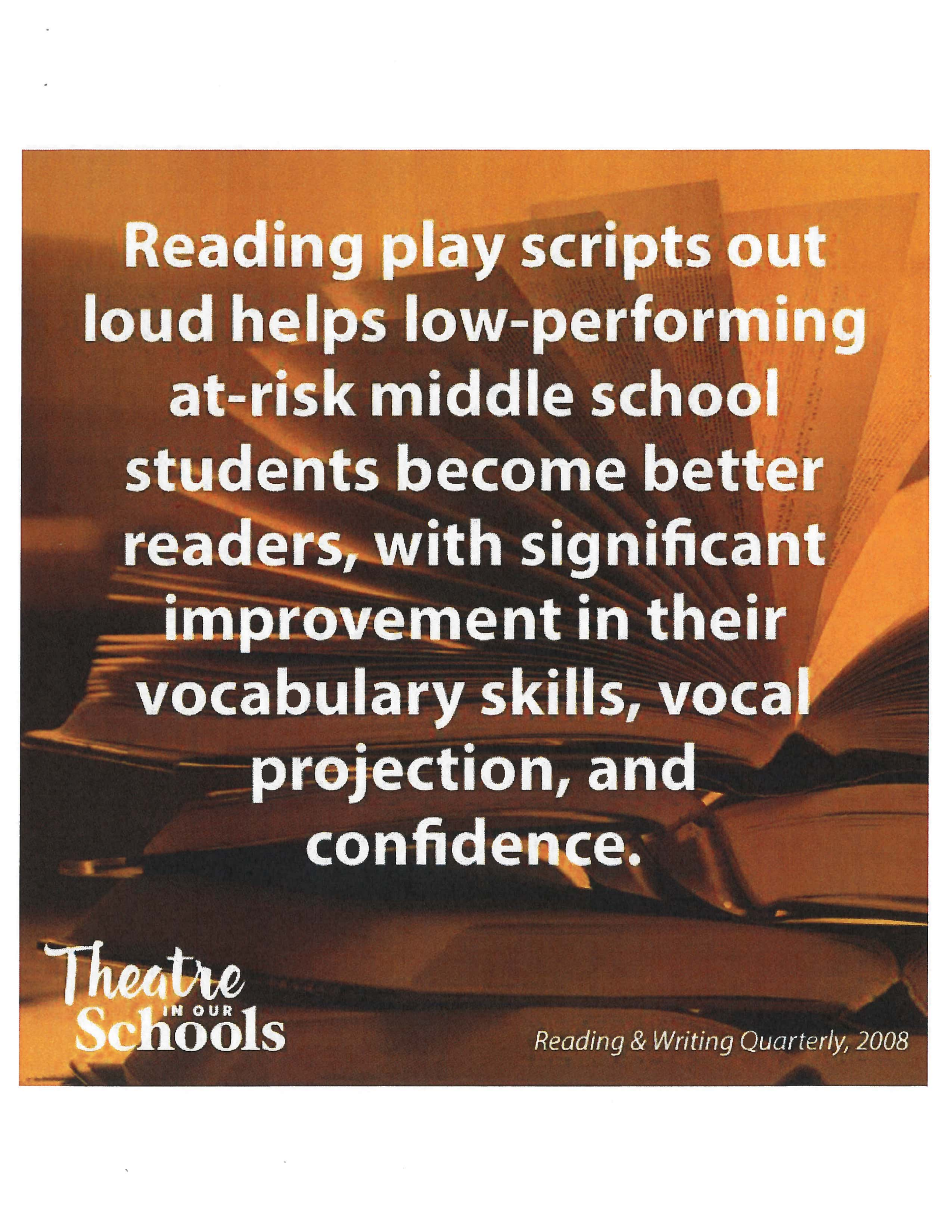
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Mind, Brain and Education, 2011

Viewing plays about significant social issues, such as poverty, can help stimulate meaningful dialogue and understanding between teachers and students.

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Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance, 2010



Reading play scripts out loud helps low-performing at-risk middle school students become better readers, with significant improvement in their vocabulary skills, vocal projection, and confidence.


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Reading & Writing Quarterly, 2008

**Middle school students
engaged in
play-building learn
conflict resolutions skills,
greater respect for peers,
and how to listen to
multiple points of view.**

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International Journal of Education & the Arts, 2006

The background of the entire page is a solid blue color. Scattered across this background are several black silhouettes of graduation caps (mortarboards) with tassels, some appearing to be floating or falling. The text is centered in the upper half of the page.

**High school students
who earn few or no
arts credits are five
times less likely to
graduate than
students who earn
multiple arts credits.**

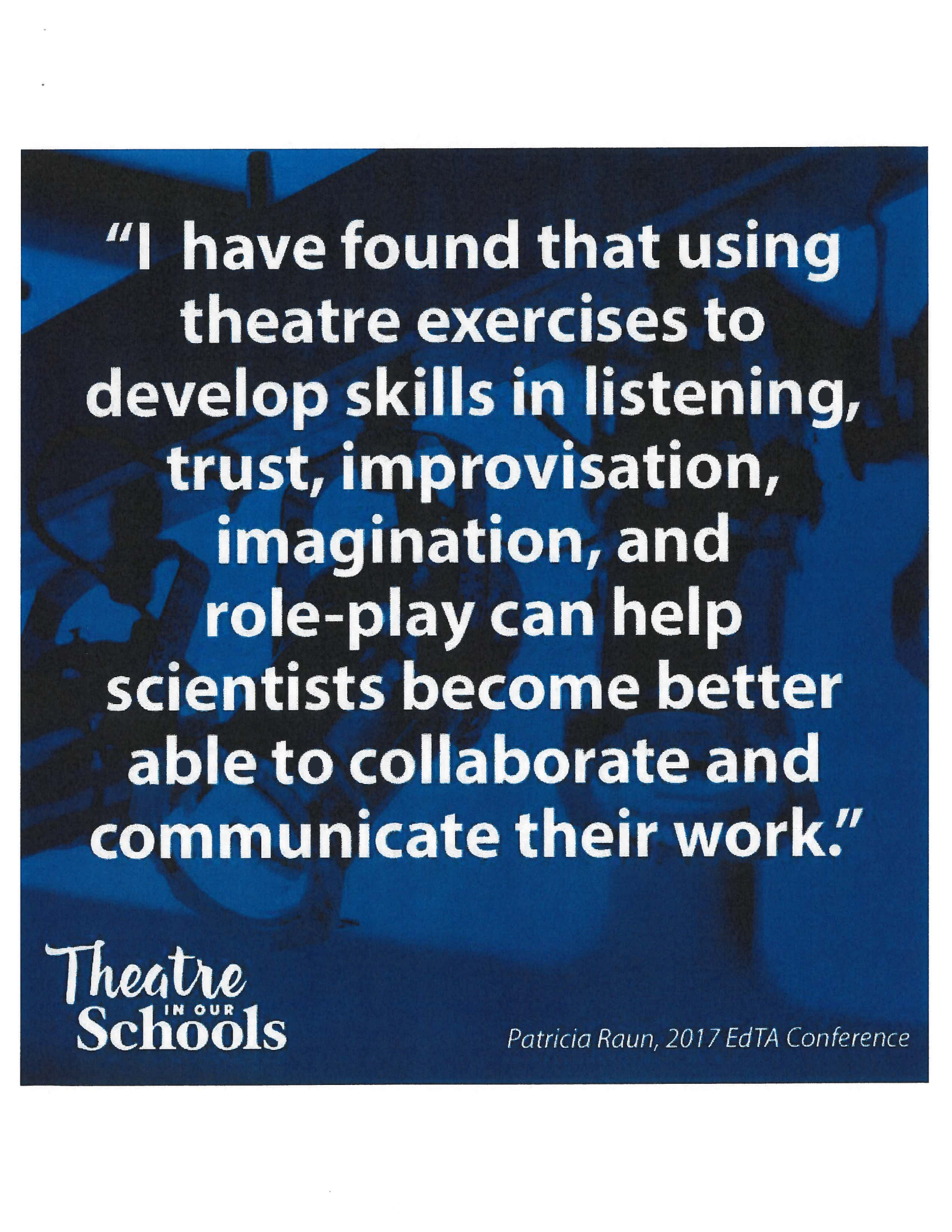
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*National Endowment for the Arts: The Arts and
Achievement in At-Risk Youth, 2012*

In 2015, students who took four years of arts classes in high school scored an average of 92 points higher on their SATs than students who took only one half year or less.

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The College Board



“I have found that using theatre exercises to develop skills in listening, trust, improvisation, imagination, and role-play can help scientists become better able to collaborate and communicate their work.”

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Patricia Raun, 2017 EdTA Conference

**High-poverty grade
K-2 English language
learners who receive
weekly drama lessons
demonstrate
increased listening
and speaking skills on
standardized tests.**

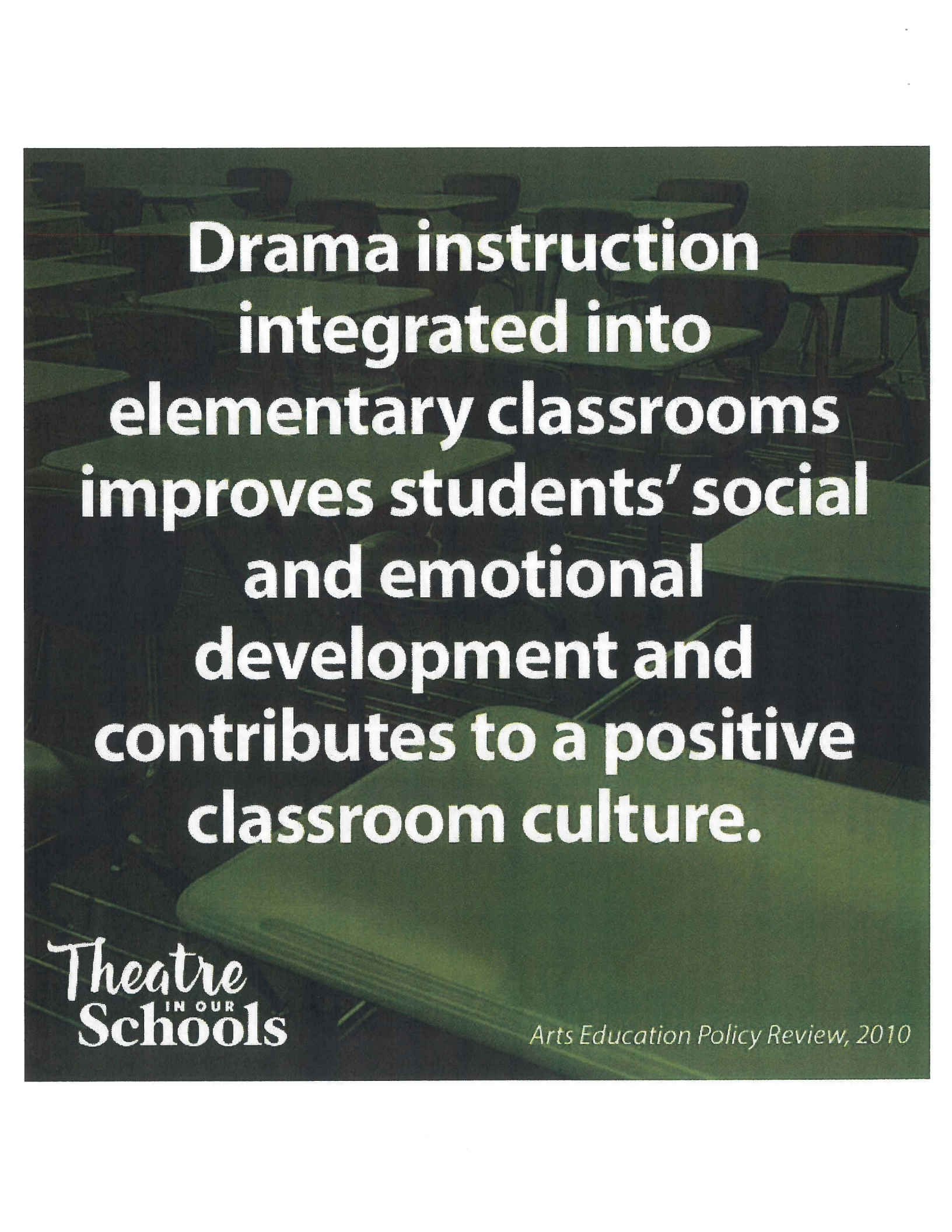
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Journal for Learning through the Arts, 2014

**Middle school students
taught lessons that
integrate drama into
instruction are more
likely to voice their own
ideas and engage in
learning through active
classroom participation.**

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Journal for Learning through the Arts, 2011



**Drama instruction
integrated into
elementary classrooms
improves students' social
and emotional
development and
contributes to a positive
classroom culture.**

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Arts Education Policy Review, 2010



**High school students
engaged in Applied
Drama playmaking
gain an understanding
of their voice as a tool
for positive change in
society.**

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Research in Drama Education Journal, 2011

**95% of school
administrators
believe that theatre
experiences
improve students'
overall academic
skills.**


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*2012 EdTA-Utah State University Survey of
Theatre Education Programs in U.S. High Schools*

**Students with
high levels of
arts involvement
are less likely to
drop out of
school.**

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*The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth:
Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies, 2012*

A green backpack is shown in the background, resting on a grassy field. The backpack is the central focus of the image, with its straps and pockets visible. The text is overlaid on the backpack.

**Disadvantaged
students in grades 8-12
who receive an arts
education are three
times more likely to
earn a Bachelor's degree
than students who lack
those experiences.**

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National Endowment for the Arts, 2016

**Young adults who
had arts-rich
experiences in high
school are more
likely to engage in
public
volunteerism.**

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*National Endowment for the Arts: The Arts and
Achievement in At-Risk Youth, 2011*

**Students from
high-income
families are twice as
likely to participate
in school plays or
musicals than
students from
low-income families.**

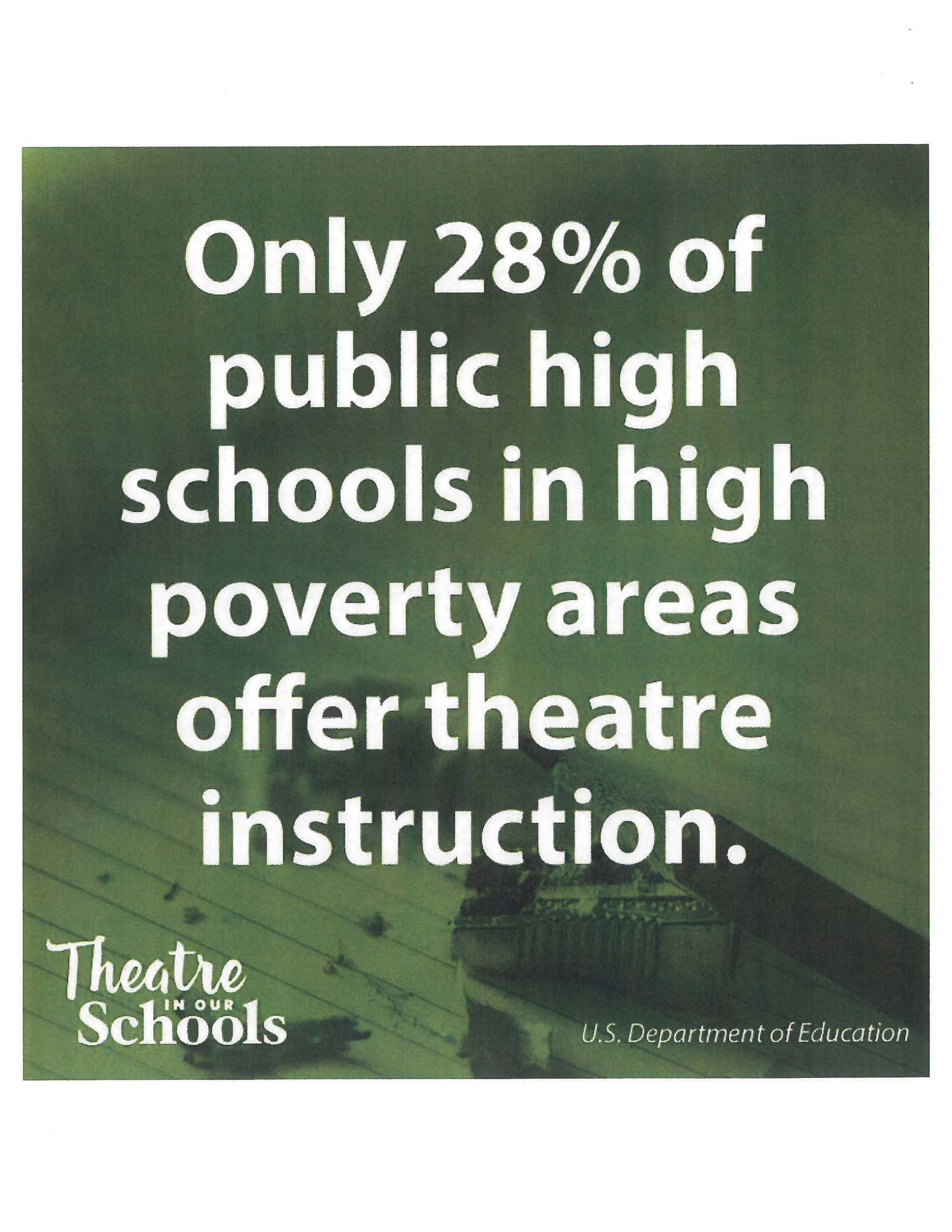
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Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art, 2009

High poverty students with sustained involvement in theatre show substantial improvement in reading proficiency, gains in self-concept and motivation, and higher levels of empathy for others.

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Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art, 2009



**Only 28% of
public high
schools in high
poverty areas
offer theatre
instruction.**

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U.S. Department of Education



**Middle school students
who participate in
drama programs are
less likely to engage in
risky, delinquent,
and/or violent
behaviors.**

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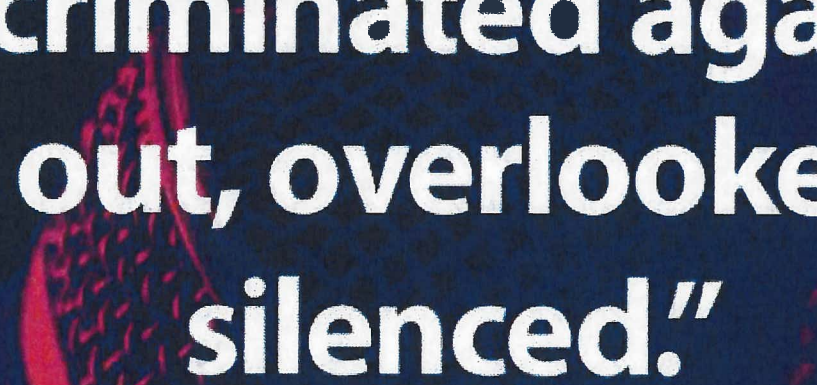
*Whole Brain Learning: The fine arts with students
at risk, 2006*



**89% of surveyed
business
executives
participated in the
arts during their
school careers.**

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Unmasking Business Success, 2015



**“In theatre, you have
the power to bring
voice to those who have
been marginalized,
discriminated against,
left out, overlooked, or
silenced.”**

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*Dr. Monique M. Chism, Assistant Secretary for Policy
and Programs, U.S. Department of Education,
speaking at the 2016 EdTA National 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 our work in theatre?”

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Patricia Raun, 2017 EdTA Conference

**In 2008,
African-American
and Hispanic
students had less
than half the access
to arts education as
White students.**

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NEA Office of Research & Analysis, 2011

