



Why Arts Education is Vital to the Success of Our Economy

| By Helen Eaton, Chief Executive Officer of Settlement Music School

It is easy to see how an arts education can directly impact a person's life. The pride is written across her face as she performs her first recital on stage. The persistence that comes with daily practice shines through as she works her way through a difficult school project. Strong listening skills are put to use in every relationship she builds.

Perhaps what is not always as transparent is how that arts education can impact the local economy.

Community arts schools are uniquely positioned to help advance Philadelphia's economic future through what they teach – the arts. The arts teach children skills such as developing an informed perception, articulating a vision, learning to solve problems and make decisions, working productively with their peers, building self-confidence and self-discipline, developing the ability to imagine what might be, and accepting responsibility to complete tasks from start to finish. These skills are critical in school and in the world's 21st century economy. Our students will be better prepared for whatever is required of Philadelphia's future workforce.

In Northeast Philadelphia, Settlement Music School is working to nurture these skills in young people at the School's Kardon-Northeast Branch. Established in the 1960s, this branch has grown to have the second highest enrollment of all six branches with a majority of students coming from the neighboring Eastern European and Asian communities.





In addition to the existing Music Education Pathways strings program with Thomas Holme Elementary School, in partnership with The Office of The Arts and Academic Enrichment of the School District of Philadelphia, the Kardon-Northeast Branch continues to deliver the Tacony Academy Charter High School “pep band” concept through after-school learning experiences for band students.

The Branch also recently helped to send piano student Aaron Patterson to the Curtis Institute of Music.

If students of community arts schools, like Aaron, end up transitioning into local careers in the arts, they are contributing to a powerhouse of economic impact in our region. According to the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, Southeastern Pennsylvania’s cultural organizations and their audiences have a combined impact of \$4.1 billion on the region’s economy. Jobs created by arts and culture provide \$1.3 billion in household income. In terms of tourism, 42 million visitors came to Greater Philadelphia in 2016 and spent a record \$6.7 billion, generating a total \$11 billion in economic impact to the region.

The vast majority of Settlement’s students do not end up in the arts, yet their ability to be productive, contributing members of society is further enhanced by the arts. Many community music schools, like Settlement, provide students with the foundation to become strong leaders, who, in turn, bring investment and jobs to our city, contributing to the overall economic engine for our entire region. ●

