

### **Creative/arts education matters:**

- Nearly **45% of business executives** say American workers lack the "deeper learning" skills needed for the modern workforce — creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking, all skills built through arts education.
- Students in arts-rich programs consistently score higher on tests of creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking than peers without that access.
- The World Economic Forum names **creative thinking** as one of the top skills workers will need going forward, as automation and AI reshape traditional jobs.
- Disadvantaged and at-risk youth see **even greater gains** from arts education than their peers — directly relevant to the underserved communities Creative Works of Louisiana focuses on.

### **AI literacy for the next generation (used responsibly):**

- **76% of global education leaders** now view AI literacy as an essential part of a basic education for every student.
- **66% of employers** say they wouldn't hire someone without basic AI literacy skills.
- Despite the demand, there's a real gap: only **8% of the youngest students (Pre-K–3rd grade)** are getting any formal AI literacy instruction, compared to 80% of high schoolers — meaning younger kids and under-resourced communities are being left behind first.
- AI literacy also shows the **biggest generational skills gap** of any workplace skill measured in 2026 — a 19-point gap between how important people say it is and how confident they actually feel using it. That gap is exactly what a program like yours could close.

### **Louisiana context (why this work matters here specifically):**

- Louisiana ranked **50th out of 50 states** in the U.S. News & World Report 2026 Best States rankings — the *only* state to land in the bottom 10 across every single category measured, including education (46th) and economy (49th).
- Louisiana ranks **3rd-worst in the nation for educational attainment**.
- A WalletHub study found Louisiana ranks **1st in the country for "disconnected youth"** — young people aged 18-24 who are not working, not in school, and have no more than a high school diploma.

*Sources: Education Commission of the States; Royal College of Art; EdWeek/Microsoft 2025 AI in Education Report; DemandSage AI in Education Statistics 2026; U.S. News & World Report Best States 2026; WalletHub At-Risk Youth Study*