

# ACCESS TO ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY ARTS EDUCATION FOR ALL

## HELPING CHILDREN ACHIEVE IN SCHOOL, WORK, AND LIFE

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### ACTION NEEDED

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#### We urge Congress to:

- Advance student access to arts education (dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts) through the **vital role of robust federal education funding. Appropriate and ensure timely distribution of FY 2027 funding to states and districts for programs authorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act:**
  - \$18.68 billion for Title I to support arts education in our nation's highest-poverty schools.
  - \$3 billion for Title II to support content-specific professional development for arts educators.
  - \$1.6 billion for Title IV, Part A to strengthen arts learning in a Well-Rounded education.
  - \$2.09 billion for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which supports afterschool arts learning.
  - \$40 million in funding for the Assistance for Arts Education grants will support community partnerships and the dissemination of evidence-based strategies to advance arts learning nationwide.
- Co-sponsor the bipartisan "Arts Education for All" Act (HR2485) introduced by Reps. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) and Don Bacon (R-NE).
- Support arts teaching and learning through federal education research and data collection.

### TALKING POINTS

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- **The arts and music are included as part of a "Well-Rounded Education" in federal law.** This designation, and prior inclusion of the arts in the list of core academic subjects in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is confirmation that the arts are essential to a complete education and belong in the instructional day. Federal education funding (such as Title I, teacher training, and school improvement) is directed to support all aspects of a well-rounded education, including the arts. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) sent a ["Dear Colleague" letter](#) to chief state school officers in October 2024 regarding the use of federal funding to support arts education. Prior letters of this kind were issued in 2004, 2009, and 2013. Congress should affirm arts education as an essential part of a complete education and encourage state and local education authorities to use supplemental federal funding to increase access to arts education for all students.
- **Students are increasingly in need of environments that support active engagement in learning.** Access to arts learning can motivate students to attend school and significantly reduce chronic absenteeism rates. Seniors in the state of Virginia who are "career arts" students (students who take arts classes each year in high school) show between 32.3% and 50.8% lower chronic absenteeism rates than their peers, based on a [2024 study](#).
- **Students in our nation's highest-poverty schools, schools eligible for Title I funding, have the least access to arts education.** A report released by the Arts Education Data Project in 2022 found that more than 2 million students in U.S. public schools have no access to any arts education. The majority of these students attend schools in very rural and major urban communities; have a high percentage of students from low-income families; and represent a

student population that is majority Black, Hispanic, or Native American. Research shows that arts education can have dramatic effects on critical skills, such as creativity, teamwork and perseverance. While arts education supports success across student groups, disadvantaged and at-risk youth often see even greater success through these programs.

- **Federal resources should support the many schools that are struggling to recruit and retain arts educators, which impacts the quality and availability of arts education.** According to the Institute for Education Sciences, 35% of all public schools that had teaching vacancies during the 2022-23 school year found it very difficult or were not able to fill vacancies in music or the arts. Greater challenges were experienced by schools serving a high percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches and rural schools.
- **Federal funds that support a Well-Rounded education (Title IV-A) are a successful investment.** A 2019 non-scientific survey found that more than \$30 million of Title IV-A funds were helping increase access for students to music and arts education in 26 states.
- **Congress should fully fund the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program (21CCLC),** allowing after-school programs to fully embrace the arts as a learning opportunity for all students in and out of the traditional school day. A 2023 report from the Afterschool Alliance found that students who attended 21st CCLC programs made significant improvements in classroom behavior, homework completion, and class participation.
- **The U.S. Department of Education, for more than two decades, has provided grants through the Assistance for Arts Education (AAE) program to strengthen the arts as part of a well-rounded education.** The AAE program has received consistent bipartisan support from Congress since FY04 and reached its highest funding level in FY10. A [U.S. Department of Education resource center](#) highlights funded projects.
- **Federal data that transparently and comprehensively reports on arts education is urgently needed.** Comprehensive collection and reporting of arts education data at the federal level--including gaps in access, participation, and quality - helps ensure that all young people have access to excellent arts learning opportunities, as explained in a 2024 [report](#) from the Arts Education Partnership. The National Arts Standards can serve as a foundation for reliable measures of what children know and are able to do in the arts, and 43 states have adopted or adapted the standards and have informed prior data collection in the arts, undertaken by the Institute for Education Sciences and National Assessment of Educational Progress.

