



2026

JOINT LEGISLATIVE BUDGET HEARING ON ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

New York State Education Department

“I must study politics and war, that my sons may study mathematics and philosophy...in order to give their children the right to study painting, poetry, music and architecture.” –John Adams

On behalf of the New York State Alliance for Arts Education, the statewide network representing thousands of educators in the fields of Art, Music, Theatre, Dance, and Media Arts across New York’s 731 school districts, 37 BOCES, 64 SUNY Colleges, as well as arts educators and teaching artists in independent schools, colleges, and community based organizations, we wish to lend our voice to the chorus of advocates urging you to maintain full funding of public education, and to avoid unprecedeted cuts which will inevitably result in further decreases in arts education in our elementary, middle, and high schools.

Few would question our shared belief that New York is the nation’s, indeed the world’s cultural capital: for centuries we have recruited and trained, presented and celebrated the finest talents in the artistic world on the greatest stages and in a myriad museums and galleries. And that success has contributed to one of the economic wonders of the modern world, cities and towns transformed into thriving communities and global tourist destinations.

As the Governor put it in a recent State of the State:

New York’s creative sector is a key driver of economic growth that employs hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers...New York’s status as a cultural capital gives it a competitive advantage that supports core industries including tourism, retail, and hospitality...In remote areas, arts organizations serve as important regional hubs for community activity, anchoring downtown revitalization efforts, reanimating abandoned buildings and blighted lots, and contributing to the renaissance of towns and cities facing population loss and the decline of traditional industries. In every corner of the state, they provide programming that supports healthier, happier, more connected, engaged, and equitable communities.

And how do we achieve this pre-eminence? By providing a comprehensive arts education, which, regardless of zip-code, socio-economic status or demographic, provides every student with a quality, sequential arts education delivered by professional educators. The results? A culturally literate society, which celebrates and supports art, music, theatre, dance, and the literary and media arts...and a pipeline of talent ready for success in every aspect of creative industry.

The New York Regents have recognized the central role of the arts in a thorough, quality education by adopting an Arts Pathway to Graduation, which has attracted over 5,000 high

school students, and by prioritizing the arts in their recently adopted NY Inspires Portrait of a Graduate: indeed, the education profession has acknowledged that S-T-E-A-M (the integration of the arts into Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) is the key to twenty-first century innovation.

Current regulation requires a single year's credit in the arts for graduation. Yet, absent the inclusion of the arts in our foundational legislation, there are far too many gaps in delivery at the building level, yawning opportunity gaps, and the ever-present temptation for administrators to balance their budgets by curtailing the arts.

And, at the NYSED level, post-recession staffing cuts have reduced the number of Associates who oversee arts education for 2.5 million students in over 4,000 schools in 768 school districts and BOCES to *one single officer*, whereas in prior years there was an Associate for each arts discipline.

So...for the coming year we urge you, in your wisdom,

- *To maintain full Foundation Aid funding.*
- *To insist that every district provide access to a sequential education in the visual and performing arts for every student*
- *To restore at least one of the eliminated arts associate positions in the office of Curriculum and Instruction.*
- *To restore full funding (\$2 million) for the state's New York State Summer Schools of the Arts, proven training ground for outstanding talent.*
- *To embed in the budget the long-awaited bills which address the omission of the arts (since 1951 and 1958) from the state's list of recognized subjects.*
- *To approve the Regents' request for a \$12 increase in Cultural Education funding.*

These may seem small, even mere housekeeping, matters in a \$260 billion budget, but we at NYSAAE can assure you that these adjustments will go a long way to ensuring that no student is denied the creative opportunities (s)he deserves.

Let us avoid the fate foreseen by Denver's poet laureate, Lalo Delgado, when he wrote *Remember that chicanito flunking math and English?*

He is the Picasso of your western states.

But he will die with one thousand masterpieces

Hanging only from his mind.

Thank you for your understanding and support: please continue to fuel this creative engine which contributes so much to the state's economy, its workforce, and its quality of life.
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