



New York City Arts in Education Roundtable  
520 8th Avenue  
Suite 330  
New York, NY 10018

**Re: Support for Arts Education in New York State FY 2027 Budget**

Dear NY State Legislators,

There is a critical need for support for arts education in NY State in the FY 2027 budget. Arts education and exposure to New York's cultural riches are an essential component of every child's education. New York must prioritize universal access to high-quality, culturally-responsive, and sequential arts education for ALL students with dedicated, adequate, and equitable funding. **We call on New York State to fund NYSCA at \$210M, restore staffing for arts education at the NYS Education Department, fully fund an equitable Foundation Aid Formula that meets all students' needs, and make arts a core academic subject.**

Engagement in the arts provides students with an avenue for learning, social, and career development that is not measured by standardized tests. Instead, the arts create a safe environment for students to learn essential life skills to help them reach their full potential. These skills are more important now than ever, as our students navigate a complex and ever-changing world.

Research shows youth arts programs support career pathways. According to a recent [report by the Wallace Foundation](#), a vast majority (94%) shared that participating in an arts program helped prepare them for success in the working world — "whether by teaching them valuable skills like resume-writing and networking, or offering glimpses of career options they may not have learned about from their family or guidance counselor."

Although the Federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) outlines that the arts are a critical component of a child's education, New York is one of only 18 states that does not consider arts a core curriculum subject. Across the northeastern part of the country, 7 out of 10 states have already codified arts as a core subject — New York is now falling behind our regional partners in an area we once led. In New York City, arts education is woefully underfunded, inconsistent, and inequitable. According to the city's [Annual Arts in Schools Report](#), just 31% of eighth-grade students meet the New York State Education Department's requirements and guidelines for arts education, which recommends students have access to at least two different arts disciplines. That number has remained largely unchanged since 2015. A 2025 City Council oversight hearing on arts education also revealed that 290 NYC public schools lack a certified arts teacher (23% of schools) — leaving thousands of students without a

dedicated arts teacher in their school. Our young people deserve better. Unfortunately, we don't know which schools are most impacted now (both in NYC and across the state) unless a more formal study is conducted.

Dance, music, theater, visual arts, and media arts provide evidence-based solutions for engaging the whole child. Arts education nurtures social-emotional wellness, prepares students to enter the workforce, improves academic outcomes in the classroom, and increases parent involvement. With only one associate in the arts at the state education department to serve 2.5M students in 732 school districts (compared to 5-6 associates pre-2008 recession), arts deserts abound in urban and rural school districts. That one associate position also remains vacant as of the time of writing, leaving no dedicated staff to support arts instruction statewide. We are failing to grow our own talent for NY's creative industries — especially at a time when historic investments are being made in New York's film and media industries. Instead [47% of NYC schools reported that funding for the arts is generally insufficient](#). Investment and support for arts education means building a pathway for employment in the creative workforce needed to fill those union jobs.

Arts & Cultural Organizations are critical community partners in providing arts instruction in schools and communities. In 2025, NYSCA granted more than \$8M specifically to organizations offering arts education programs statewide. In NYC alone, 900+ arts organizations partnered with [NYC Public Schools in the 2024-2025 school year](#) (increased from 449+ in 2019-2020 school year).

**We ask that the legislature...**

#### ***INVEST IN ARTS IN OUR SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES***

- **Fund the NY State Council on the Arts at a baseline of \$210M (\$100M programs + \$100M capital + \$10 million for stabilization grants)** to stabilize the cultural economy and employ arts workers in all 10 state regions and 62 state counties — 2,700 grants awarded in FY25. Funding predominantly supports small/midsize organizations (with 71% supporting orgs with budgets <\$1M). Adjusting for inflation, NYS investment in arts is 68% lower than its 1990 peak.
- **Ensure NYS uses an equitable Foundation Aid Formula to meet students' needs in alignment with the [Coalition for Equitable Education Funding platform](#).** NYS must also make important updates, including updating the Regional Cost Index (as proposed in S.8125/A.9049) and adding a per-pupil weight for students who are homeless or in foster care (as proposed in S.8139/A.9048).
- **Restore arts staffing at NYSED Arts Education is grossly understaffed at NYSED (1 full-time staff compared to 5 staff overseeing arts education).** We strongly encourage prioritizing filling the vacant role and support the Regents' request to restore at least one of the eliminated arts associate positions in the office of Curriculum and Instruction.

- **Support NYSED Cultural Education Funding and restore full funding (\$2M) for New York Summer School of the Arts** Per the recommendation from NYS Board of Regents, also approve the request for a \$12 million increase in Cultural Education funding.

#### ***STRENGTHEN POLICY RELATED TO ARTS EDUCATION***

- **Support legislation ([Senate Bill S6318A](#) and [Assembly Bill A6490B](#)) which would add arts and music education into the public-school curriculum outlined in NYS education law.** Per ESSA, these programs are a foundational component to a well-rounded education from elementary through high school. This policy would simply put arts education on par with other required NYS curriculum subjects. It also ensures that more students have exposure to arts education as a means of bolstering the workforce development pipeline in addition to building foundational life skills needed across career paths.
- **Improve data transparency in arts education statewide via [Senate Bill S1072](#).** Direct the commissioner of education to require public schools to report on compliance with art education instruction requirements.

In addition to the outlined priorities, the Roundtable is proud to be part of the Voices for a Creative NY coalition which is creating a statewide strategic framework for enacting a New York State Creative Economy Plan. We look forward to submitting this in the future.

In closing, we want inviting, colorful, vibrant, and thriving communities — that starts with the arts. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

**Kimberly Olsen**

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