



New York City Arts in Education Roundtable
219 West 19th Street
2nd Floor
New York, New York 10011

Re: Support for Arts Education in New York State FY 2025 Budget

Dear NY State Legislators,

There is a critical need for support for arts education in NY State in the FY 2025 budget. Arts education and exposure to New York's cultural riches are an essential component of every child's education. New York must prioritize equity and 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 make arts a core academic subject and restore staffing for arts education at the New York State Education Department.**

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 33% 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, while the number of certified arts teachers citywide has declined. Between 2020 and 2023, public schools across the five boroughs lost 425 full-time certified arts teachers (14.88% decrease) — leaving thousands more students without a dedicated arts teacher in their school. [47% of schools reported that funding for the arts is generally insufficient](#). The combined impact of proposed budget cuts and [the loss of federal stimulus money set to expire on June 30th](#) stands to only widen this access gap for years to come.

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. 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. Investment and support for arts education means building a pathway for employment in the creative workforce needed to fill those union jobs.

We ask that the legislature...

- Support [Senate Bill S285](#) and [Assembly Bill A1502](#) which would add arts and music education into the public-school curriculum outlined in NYS education law. Given the lack of compliance with current arts education teaching requirements, this sets a baseline for greater equity and opportunity across the

state. It also ensures that more students have exposure to arts education as a means of bolstering the pipeline for arts workers in addition to building important life skills needed across career paths.

- **Restore arts staffing at NYSED** Arts Education is grossly understaffed at NYSED. We support the Regents request to restore at least one of the eliminated arts associate positions in the office of Curriculum and Instruction.
- **Restoration full funding (\$2M) for New York Summer School of the Arts** While the New York Summer School of the Arts suffered a pandemic cut, we support the Regents' request for \$2 million to restore these unique programs, while sustaining access to local, regional summer arts programs.

Success in school and in life starts with the arts. In order to improve literacy, support workforce development, provide social-emotional support, and improve long-term academic results, arts education must be a central focus and investment in the FY 2025 State Budget. With your support and advocacy, arts education will be in every school to re-ignite students' learning and provide a pathway to a bright future for all. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Olsen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kimberly Olsen

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