



EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY ARTS EDUCATION: HELPING CHILDREN ACHIEVE IN SCHOOL, WORK, AND LIFE

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress to:

- Strengthen equitable access to arts education through the Well-Rounded Education provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- Co-sponsor the “Arts Education for All” bill written by Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), HR 5581.
- Fund the U.S. Department of Education’s Assistance to Arts Education program at \$40 million.
- Provide \$2 billion in support for the Student Support & Academic Enrichment Grants under Title IV, Part A, to support Well-Rounded Education.
- Provide \$1.8 billion in support for the Nita Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21stCCLC) after-school program.
- Require the U.S. Department of Education to issue annual policy memoranda promoting the eligibility under current law for the arts to be supported through Title I funds and through professional development opportunities for arts educators under Title II.
- Provide at least \$4 million for the Institute of Education Science to implement a Fast Response Survey System (FRSS) study in the arts; include pre-K–12 arts education in the annual School and Staffing Survey and other data instruments; and restore and appropriately fund the arts in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), including full and robust assessments in dance, theater, media arts, music, and visual art.

TALKING POINTS

- **The arts and music are included as part of a “Well-Rounded Education” in federal law.** This designation — alongside reading, math, science, and other subjects — is confirmation that the arts are essential to a complete education and belong in the main instructional day. Senate report language described the arts as “dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts, and other arts disciplines as determined by the State or local educational agency.” 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. As part of its commitment to equity and justice, the White House and Congress should affirm arts education as a right for all children and encourage state and local education authorities to use federal funding to provide arts education, as is authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.
- **Students in our nation’s highest-poverty schools have the least access to arts education. Persistent disparities in access to arts education in schools must be addressed.** The 2009–2010 U.S. Department of Education’s Fast Response Statistical Survey — the most recent data collected at the federal level — found that schools with a higher concentration of students in poverty were less likely to offer arts education.

- A 2014 Indiana University research study indicates that elementary students from urban settings, rural areas, and low-income households and students of color do not share the same access to high-quality music education as their white, suburban counterparts. As Education Secretary Arne Duncan stated in 2012, “This is absolutely an equity issue and a civil rights issue.”
- **Federal data that transparently and comprehensively reports on arts education is long overdue.** The Fast Response Statistical Survey measuring access to arts education has not been administered since 2010. The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) has removed the arts from the schedule of NAEP assessments, which measure what students are learning in the arts and is the only nationally recognized assessment in the arts outside of limited Advanced Placement assessments. With little notice to the arts education community, or to Congress, the arts, along with economics, geography, and foreign languages, were removed from the 10-year calendar of assessments beginning in 2020. The 2014 National Core Arts Standards can serve as a foundation for creating reliable measures of what children know and are able to do in dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts. Since their release, 38 states have adopted or adapted the Core Standards. Data collection must be immediately reinstated.
- **Students are returning to school increasingly in need of environments that support their social and emotional development.** Research demonstrates that arts education has a multitude of benefits to support students’ emotional well-being and help students cope with social isolation and the rapidly changing reality.
- **Arts education nurtures the creation of a welcoming school environment where students can express themselves in a safe and positive way.** Celebrating the ability to come together as educators and students is vital to creating a healthy and inclusive school community. The arts, through a rich partnership among certified arts educators, teaching artists, and community arts providers, play a valuable role in helping students and their families build and sustain community and cultural connections.
- **Education leaders at the national, state, and local levels are calling on policy-makers to recognize that arts education is a key to reigniting students’ learning in a post-COVID-19 world.** The Arts ARE Education campaign affirms the following: Arts education helps nurture healthy, inclusive communities where all points of view are respected and helps students understand their own cultural roots and appreciate others’ cultural roots and traditions; arts education supports the social and emotional well-being of students.
- **Title IV-A funds are making a difference.** A non-scientific survey found more than \$30 million of Title IV-A funds were helping increase access for students to music and arts education in 26 states. These Title IV-A funds need to be used for their authorized purpose to assure specific outcomes and support Well-Rounded Education activities and avoid transfers into other programs.
- **Congress should fund the 21st Century Community Learning Centers at \$1.8 billion,** allowing after-school programs to fully embrace the arts as a learning opportunity for all students in and out of the traditional school day.
- **The U.S. Department of Education provides grants through the Assistance to Arts Education (AAE) program to strengthen the arts as part of a well-rounded**

education. The AAE program at the U.S. Department of Education is authorized under Title IV of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and has received consistent bipartisan support from Congress year after year.

