

Arts in Education **R**^{NYC}**UNDTABLE**

****Directions:** *This template is a tool to help guide your advocacy. Please customize based on your individual/your organization’s circumstances (but be sure to include “It Starts with the Arts”). Feel free to personalize or edit the letter to get your point across.*

This sample testimony template is for written testimony. If you plan to deliver live testimony, please adjust so that your spoken statement is under 2 minutes. You can submit either your longer written testimony or abridged testimony for the record (via paper or by emailing testimony@council.nyc.gov).

You can submit your testimony at <https://council.nyc.gov/testify/> or by emailing testimony@council.nyc.gov — additional information about submitting your testimony can be found on our website.

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[INSERT LOGO or YOUR NAME]

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on [INSERT],
Hon. [INSERT CHAIR NAME], Chair
[INSERT DATE]

Thank you to Chair [INSERT CHAIR NAME] and the City Council for your support of arts education across New York City. I’m writing to support the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools. My name is [INSERT NAME], and I work [at ORGANIZATION NAME / for SCHOOL NAME] in [NEIGHBORHOOD].

The mission of [ORGANIZATION NAME] is [INSERT MISSION]. [INSERT 1-3 sentences about your / your organization’s programs and reach. If available, use data to quantify and define the populations you serve].

[INSERT 2-4+ sentences on how city funding impacts you / your students / your organization and . Including specific examples related to delivery/access to arts education to schools and communities, impact of not knowing cuts, program delays, cash flow/delayed payments, etc.]

[INSERT 2-4+ sentences with specific “success” stories that you’ve experienced related to arts education in the past few years. Note any benefits and results of arts and cultural education to help explain to the City Council why arts education is essential.]

Arts education should be available to ALL students, not just some. Unfortunately, only 33% of eighth-grade students met NYS learning requirements for arts education last school year. Between 2020 and 2023, NYC public schools lost 14.8% full-time certified arts teachers — leaving thousands more students without a

dedicated arts teacher in their school. 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.

Let us not take it out on our students or their future. Programs that foster student engagement, creativity, mental health, and community rejuvenation must be prioritized. We join our colleagues in asking the city to:

- **Hire certified arts teachers (\$38M):** Ensure that all schools have at least one certified arts teacher, by bolstering the pipeline of certified arts teachers via supplemental certification program and filling arts staffing gaps (closing the equity gap for at least 307 schools).
- **Expiring Federal Covid-Era Funds (\$41M):** Save and baseline arts education programs on the chopping block due to \$1B in expiring federal funds, including arts initiatives, programming to support student social-emotional wellbeing and academic recovery through the arts, and Summer Rising.
- **Continue and increase “Support for Arts Instruction” initiative funding:** Build on city’s down payment and boost allocation from \$4M to \$6M.
- **Require DOE arts funding be spent on the arts (\$15M):** Boost the per student arts allocation to \$100 from \$80.47, and require that money be spent on arts education.
- **Improve data transparency** by compelling NYC Public Schools to provide a school-by-school breakdown of the state of arts education in public schools via a Legislative Services Request, T&C, and/or Oversight Hearing.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

[YOUR NAME]

KEY TALKING POINTS

Specifically, we believe it would be helpful for the Council to hear:

- Talk about the impact of city funding on your ability to reach students and engage with new/returning partner schools (and that this level of funding should be continued).
- Specific results and examples of successfully providing arts and cultural education this year will be the most impactful for continuing to let the City Council know that Arts Education is Essential (i.e. trends they saw in learning, outcomes that tell the story of how arts ed can reach students in important ways);
- Specific examples of how you are currently experiencing or anticipate seeing the negative impact of budget cuts on your organization and students (to help create urgency to prioritize funding these areas).
- Stress the well-documented research showing that kids engaged in vibrant arts programs have markedly better academic and social-emotional outcomes.
- Thank the City Council for their investment and commitment to arts, culture, and arts education (this is the floor not the ceiling, when it comes to funding the arts in schools!)
- Universal access to arts education is an issue of equity in education; we still have a long way to go and these cuts stand to set us back considerably to reaching a point where all students have access to arts education.
- We encourage you to uplift messages of other coalitions as it relates to you and your work! Here is some additional written testimony language from other advocates:

Nonprofit New York: The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why [**YOUR INSTITUTION HERE**] joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

Advocates for Children: In addition to the \$600 million in cuts to education explicitly listed in the November Financial Plan, there is a slew of additional education programs on the chopping block. Over the last few years, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) has been using around \$1B per year in temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds for important long-term programs that were necessary long before the pandemic and will continue to be critical long after, such as 3-K, preschool special education, Summer Rising, 450 school social workers, community schools, school nurses, restorative justice, 60 school psychologists, 75 coordinators working in homeless shelters, bilingual staff, translation and interpretation, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, and more. While the federal funding will run out in June, the need for these supports will continue. Unless elected officials act, we are at risk of seeing cuts to each of these programs—cuts that are *on top of* the cuts laid out in the November Plan. Please do not let these programs end on your watch.

New Yorkers for Culture & Art: Check out [NY4CA's one-pager](#) for information about their talking points and how to testify.