

## Support Arts Education for FY2026

### For Fiscal Years (FY) 2026, we urge Congress to support funding for a well-rounded education:

- \$40 million to fund the U.S. Department of Education’s Assistance for Arts Education program, ensuring equitable access to arts education opportunities.
- \$18.68 billion to fund Title I-A, helping all children—especially those in low-income communities—meet challenging academic standards within a well-rounded education that includes arts education.
- \$3 billion to fund Title II-A, supporting the professional development of all well-rounded educators, including arts educators.
- \$1.6 billion to support the Student Support & Academic Enrichment Grants under Title IV, Part A of ESSA, reinforcing a well-rounded education that includes the arts.
- \$2.09 billion to fund 21st Century Community Learning Centers (Title IV Part B), ensuring after-school programs can fully embrace the arts as a learning opportunity for all students in and out of the traditional school day.
- ***Request that the Department of Education release their hold on FY25 Title II-A, Title IV-A and Title IV-B funds. This has a direct impact on education curriculum, programming for children, and staff salaries.***

### Background:

- **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 as part of the main instructional day. 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.
- **Access to arts education has been shown to reduce chronic absenteeism and support workforce readiness.** Access to arts learning can motivate students to attend school and has been shown to significantly reduce chronic absenteeism rates, which have increased drastically across the nation following the COVID-19 pandemic. A study of Virginia Public Schools found that students who completed four years of arts instruction had up to 50% lower rates of chronic absenteeism compared to their peers.
- **Arts education prepares students to contribute to the workforce and helps them to cultivate skills that employers are looking for in professionals.** A 2019 survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that employers seek to hire professionals with written communication skills, problem solving capabilities, and teamwork. Arts education helps students to hone these skills.
- **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 2022 report released by the Arts Education Data Project, a nonprofit initiative, found that more than 2 million students in U.S. public schools have no access to any arts education. Most of these students attend schools in major urban or very rural communities and have a high percentage of students from low-income families.
- **Students are increasingly in need of environments that support active engagement in learning and student wellness.** Research indicates that a welcoming school environment that nurtures student wellness can help students cope with social isolation and encourage self-expression in a safe and positive way. The arts, through a rich partnership among certified arts educators, teaching artists, and community providers, play a valuable role in helping students and their families build and sustain community and cultural connections.

- **Title IV-A funds are making a difference.** A pre-pandemic non-scientific survey found that more than \$30 million of Title IV-A funds were helping increase access for students to music and arts education in 26 states. With the ESSER funding being obligated by September 2024, these Title IV-A funds will be needed even more to support Well-Rounded Education activities and avoid transfers into other programs.
- **The U.S. Department of Education provides grants through the Assistance for 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. A newly launched [U.S. Department of Education resource center](#) highlights funded projects.