

# Arts in Education **R**NYC **UND**TABLE

**\*\*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. Additional Key Talking Points can be found at the end of this document.

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](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov)).

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

**IMPORTANT:** To edit the template, please click "File" then "Make a Copy," download the letter directly to your computer, or copy and paste the template into a new document. **Don't forget to remove this text and the text at the end, too!**

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INSERT NAME OR ORGANIZATION]

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on [Insert name of committee],  
Hon. [INSERT name of Chair] Chair  
[INSERT Date of meeting]

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/numbers to quantify and define the populations you serve].

[INSERT 2-4+ sentences on how city funding impacts you / your students / your organization and how cuts to funding could negatively impact work. Including specific examples related to delivery/access to arts education to schools and communities, impact of uncertain budgets, 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 31% of eighth-grade students met NYS learning requirements for arts education last school year. The [\*term and condition passed by the Council last year\*](#) revealed that 379 NYC public schools lack a certified arts teacher (about 1 in 5 schools) — leaving thousands of students without a dedicated arts teacher in their school. Furthermore, the combined implications of the Class Size Mandate rollout, the Governor’s proposed changes to the Foundation Aid formula, and shifting federal funding stand to widen the arts education access gap for years to come.

Investing in arts education is an investment in our future. Therefore, I join my colleagues in urging our City to take action to ensure that all students have access to high-quality arts education. This includes:

- **Extend and baseline at-risk arts education funding (\$41M) alongside other education programs on the chopping block that were previously funded by federal stimulus dollars:** Following one-year funding to off-set expiring temporary federal stimulus dollars and city funds, arts education programs (alongside early childhood, community schools, teacher recruitment, and more) are once again at-risk of being eliminated. We stand with the Coalition of Equitable Education Funding and call on the city to shift from a one-year restoration to an annual allocation to sustain arts education and other programs currently on the chopping block.
- **Ensure Every School Has a Certified Arts Teachers (\$39.8M):** Ensure that all schools have at least one certified arts teacher, closing the equity gap for at least 379 schools. This can be done in part by bolstering the pipeline of certified arts teachers via supplemental certification program (\$4M) or funding a [PE Works-inspired](#) improvement plan.
- **Restore and Enhance “Support for Arts Instruction” initiative funding (\$6M):** Build on city’s down payment and boost allocation from \$4M to \$6M to meet city-wide demand.
- **Require DOE arts funding be spent on the arts (\$12.5M):** Boost the per student arts allocation to \$100 from \$86.67 and require that money be spent on arts education.
- **Center Arts and Culture in Youth Development Programs (\$5M):** Allocate funds to better support arts and cultural education opportunities during Summer Rising 2025 and other DYCD programs to support public safety and continued community-building opportunities via the arts.
- **Restore and Increase Baseline Funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs (\$75M):** Add \$30M to baseline funding plus a one-time add of \$45M.
- **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.
- **Prioritize timely processing of contract renewals and extensions:** Our City must establish accountability mechanisms to ensure that agency staff process awards, extensions, and renewals in a

timely manner so that service gaps are avoided (especially when it comes to the MTAC process within NYCPS).

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, social-emotional, and mental health and wellbeing-based 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 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:

**Coalition for Equitable Education Funding:** Last June, the Mayor and City Council baselined many of the important education programs that were at risk due to expiring federal or city funds, providing long-term funding. However, the City continued other initiatives for one year only—meaning the funding will expire at the end of June unless City leaders act to extend funding in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2026 budget.

The programs at risk of being rolled back or eliminated as soon as July 2025 are currently benefiting tens of thousands of NYC students and their families; they include 3-K, preschool special education classes, community schools, restorative justice, the Mental Health Continuum, and more. We urge Mayor Adams to baseline these programs in the FY26 Executive Budget and to make additional investments that are needed to support students, with a focus on those who have the greatest needs. Resources: [FY 2026 - CEEF Budget Agenda](#) // [Response to Release of Preliminary Budget](#)

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

**Nonprofit New York:** *Pending*