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CAE provides tools and resources to deliver quality arts learning for all children. Our innovative teaching and learning programs—fostering collaboration with teachers, school leaders, and cultural and community organizations—help build arts-infused school communities.

Our advocacy initiatives educate policymakers and the public about the need for and value of arts education as an essential ingredient in a well-rounded education and a fundamental part of children's health and well-being.

*Author: Douglas Israel,
Director of Research and Policy*

*Richard Kessler,
Executive Director*

The Center for Arts Education
14 Penn Plaza
225 W. 34th Street,
Suite 1112
New York, NY 10122
P: 877.434.ARTS
F: 212.268.5266
www.caenyc.org

THE CENTER FOR ARTS EDUCATION

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Funding for Key Areas of Arts Education Experiencing Sharp Declines – Even Before Anticipated Budget Cuts

Independent analysis of New York City Department of Education arts education spending raises cause for concern as schools face cuts to their budgets—may signal de facto shift in the provision of arts education

KEY FINDINGS

As part of ongoing analysis of data provided by the New York City Department of Education (DOE) through *ArtsCount*, the *Annual Arts in Schools Reports* and other sources, The Center for Arts Education has taken an in-depth look at system-wide budgeting for arts education over the past three school years (2006–07, 2007–08 and 2008–09).¹ The data reveal significant declines in budgeting in two primary areas of arts education: budgeting to hire the services of arts and cultural partners to deliver educational programming to schools, and budgeting for arts supplies, musical instruments and equipment. These declines began before the onset of the current economic downturn and during a period of significant growth in the city's education budget. With imminent budget cuts slated for schools, the arts are likely to suffer further debilitating losses.

Our analysis revealed that:

- Budgeting to hire the services of arts and cultural organizations to provide arts education directly to students has declined 31 percent, or \$6.6 million, since the 2006–07 school year, signaling a shift away from cultural arts partners as education service providers;²
- Budgeting for arts supplies, musical instruments and equipment has declined by 68 percent, or \$7.2 million during the same time span;
- Middle school declines are most pronounced, with decreases of 48 percent to hire the services of cultural arts partners, and 79 percent for supplies, instruments and equipment;
- These budget declines coincide with the introduction of *ArtsCount*, and the phasing out of *Project ARTS*, which provided a financial incentive for schools to invest in the arts;
- Budgeting for arts personnel has increased 11 percent, or \$31 million, in three years, with a net increase of 139 licensed arts specialists added during that time span;³
- Overall DOE expenditures increased by 13 percent, or \$2.1 billion, from the 2006–07 to the 2008–09 school year,⁴ with expenditures for school budgets increasing from \$6.6 billion to \$7.6 billion during that time span.⁵

1. All of the New York City Department of Education *Annual Arts in Schools Reports* can be accessed at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/arts/artsinschoolsreport.html#ar78>. According to the reports, arts budgeting information was calculated by the Division of Budget Operations and Review using Galaxy data.

2. As reported by the New York City Department of Education, this category, "Services/Other," contains other related expenditures, such as tickets to performances. However, this does not include the full array of vendor expenditures.

3. Annual school placement data provided by the Division of Human Resources for full-time licensed arts teachers.

4. New York City Mayor's Office of Operations, *Preliminary Fiscal 2010 Mayor's Management Report* (2010): 20, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/mmr/doe.pdf>.

5. Alison Avera, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, The New York City Department of Education, in a phone conversation, June 18, 2010; The 2008–09 mid-year school budget cut represented a decline in growth, not in year-to-year spending.

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 2007–08 school year, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Joel Klein announced the launch of *ArtsCount*, a set of strategies aimed at enhancing arts education in New York City public schools. Through *ArtsCount*, arts education would factor into the administration’s measurement of school performance, establishing “first-ever” accountability for arts programming and “signaling the importance of the arts to a student’s overall education.”

Concurrent with the launch of *ArtsCount*, the department effectively eliminated a successful initiative that provided a dedicated per-pupil funding line for arts education at all schools—no longer requiring principals to spend these funds solely on arts education. The initiative, *Project ARTS*, instituted a decade earlier by the DOE, the Mayor’s Office and the New York City Council, had been hailed as a key force in restoring arts education in many public schools after the precipitous declines that were brought about by the 1970s fiscal crisis. The dedicated arts funding provided a financial engine which provided incentives for the hiring of additional arts teachers, the purchase of arts supplies and equipment, and the formation of partnerships with arts and cultural institutions to enrich in-school arts education.

As highlighted in the following section, budgeting for two of these key areas of arts education has experienced substantial declines over the past three school years.⁶ This has occurred at all school levels, although most dramatically at the middle school level. Concurrently, there has been a noteworthy increase in budgeting for school arts personnel, reflecting contractual cost increases for existing teachers as well as the addition of new arts teachers to the system.⁷ During this time, overall DOE expenditures increased by \$2.1 billion.

The declines in funding for key areas of arts education—which began before the onset of the current economic crisis—track closely to the administration’s decision to lift the requirement that principals spend *Project ARTS* dollars solely on arts education. More broadly, the declines are symptomatic of the current school accountability system which has placed an ever-increasing focus on state exams in just two subject areas—Math and English Language Arts. The disinvestment in the key elements of arts education that we are witnessing, and the general shift away from a well-rounded comprehensive education for our children, is likely to be exacerbated by the imminent budget cuts slated for public schools.⁸

SCHOOL BUDGETING FOR ARTS EDUCATION

As illustrated in Table 1, budgeting by schools to hire the educational services of arts and cultural organizations, which includes tickets to cultural events and other related expenses, has declined by \$6.6 million from the 2006–07 school year to the 2008–09 school year, a decrease of 31 percent. Budgeting for arts supplies and equipment, which includes musical instruments and transportation to performances, has declined by \$7.2 million, or 68 percent. At the same time, budgeting for arts personnel has increased by \$31.3 million, or 11 percent.

TABLE 1. SYSTEM-WIDE BUDGETING FOR ARTS EDUCATION UNDER ARTSCOUNT

School Year	Arts Education Services	Supplies/Equipment	Personnel
2006–07	\$21,471,201	\$10,664,118	\$276,580,862
2007–08	\$15,050,535	\$3,925,082	\$289,591,558
2008–09	\$14,896,116	\$3,445,345	\$307,871,253
Difference from 06–07 to 08–09	-\$6,575,085	-\$7,218,773	+\$31,290,391
% Change Over Three Years	31% DECLINE	68% DECLINE	11% INCREASE

6. It is important to note that the figures reported are for school budgeting for the arts, not actual expenditures, which could differ. The DOE has not provided data related to actual school expenditures.

7. When tallying spending in all three areas, school arts budgets have increased in the aggregate by \$17.5 million.

8. B. Martinez and M.H. Saul, “Principals Scramble to Find Cuts,” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 3, 2010.

As is further evidenced in the following tables, elementary, middle and high schools have all experienced declines in budgeting for arts supplies and equipment, as well as for the services provided by cultural arts partners. City middle schools, however, have experienced the greatest swings of all three school levels. As noted in Table 3, middle schools budgeted almost \$2.6 million less over the time period for services by arts and cultural organizations and \$2.7 million less for the purchase of arts supplies and equipment—declines of 48 and 79 percent, respectively.

TABLE 2. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ARTS BUDGETING UNDER ARTSCOUNT

School Year	Arts Education Services	Supplies/Equipment	Personnel
2006–07	\$11,317,494	\$3,433,471	\$106,173,785
2007–08	\$8,434,028	\$1,341,572	\$112,024,819
2008–09	\$7,658,672	\$915,637	\$117,694,021
Difference from 06–07 to 08–09	-\$3,658,822	-\$2,517,834	+\$11,520,236
% Change Over Three Years	32% DECLINE	73% DECLINE	11% INCREASE

TABLE 3. MIDDLE SCHOOL ARTS BUDGETING UNDER ARTSCOUNT

School Year	Arts Education Services	Supplies/Equipment	Personnel
2006–07	\$5,436,354	\$3,371,761	\$71,578,033
2007–08	\$3,407,094	\$863,648	\$73,372,010
2008–09	\$2,850,472	\$695,601	\$84,191,939
Difference from 06–07 to 08–09	-\$2,585,882	-\$2,676,160	+\$12,613,906
% Change Over Three Years	48% DECLINE	79% DECLINE	18% INCREASE

TABLE 4. HIGH SCHOOL ARTS BUDGETING UNDER ARTSCOUNT

School Year	Arts Education Services	Supplies/Equipment	Personnel
2006–07	\$3,096,892	\$3,587,481	\$96,782,331
2007–08	\$2,124,466	\$1,684,564	\$101,943,575
2008–09	\$2,009,711	\$1,792,284	\$104,840,264
Difference from 06–07 to 08–09	-\$1,087,181	-\$1,795,197	+\$8,057,933
% Change Over Three Years	35% DECLINE	50% DECLINE	8% INCREASE

According to the data presented above, there has been an increase in budgeting for personnel system-wide and at all three school levels over the past three school years. Worth noting, however, is that middle school budgeting for personnel increased by \$12.6 million, or 18 percent, despite an actual decline of 28 certified arts specialists at the middle school level during the time span.⁹

IMPACT ON ARTS EDUCATION

Partnerships with Cultural Arts Organizations: New York City's wealth of arts and cultural organizations have been referred to by the DOE as "a tremendous asset to the public schools, providing students and teachers with access to world-class performances and exhibitions, and bringing professional artists and performers into schools to work directly with students...[providing them] with richer learning experiences."¹⁰ The partnerships forged between schools and outside organizations deepen not only arts learning opportunities for students but opportunities for learning across curricula, as well as for students to gain knowledge of the workings of the city's creative sector. They also provide an intimate and invaluable introduction to this sector to the next generation of audience members, employees and supporters.

These rich and varied arts and cultural organizations also help schools meet the New York State Education Department requirements for arts instruction, specifically at the elementary level, where state mandates require that students receive instruction in four arts disciplines (music, dance, theater, visual arts). In the areas of dance and theater, particularly—where there are recognized shortages of certified specialists—most city elementary schools are simply not equipped to meet the mandates without the support of outside organizations. According to the *Annual Arts in Schools Report* for the 2008–09 school year, only 42 percent of elementary schools facilitated dance programs through school-based staff alone, while 93 percent provided dance when they worked with an arts or cultural institution; only 41 percent of elementary schools facilitated theater programs through school-based staff alone, while 88 percent offered theater when they joined with an arts or cultural institution.¹¹

Arts Supplies and Equipment: Declines in budgeting for arts supplies and equipment also has a direct impact on arts instruction, as lessons are scaled back and hands-on learning opportunities are compromised due to inavailability of materials. Teachers, and even parent organizations, often make up for lost resources by purchasing materials with funds from their own pockets.¹² *With the ability of parent groups to supplement school arts budgets largely dependent on the financial wherewithal of parents, educational disparities can increase when schools have to rely on these parent contributions to make up for a lack of resources.*

Personnel: The increase in budgeting for personnel reflects a welcome gain of 139 arts teachers system-wide over the three-year time span. This is a positive step forward, as on-staff arts teachers provide students and schools with the expertise necessary to provide quality instruction in the arts and create a school community that values arts education. This is especially important at the middle school and high school levels, where state mandates require that schools provide students with arts instruction delivered by a certified arts teacher.

However, with almost 1,500 schools and 2,600 arts teachers in the New York City school system, the increase in the number of certified arts teachers is only responsible for a small part of the overall increase in budgeting for arts personnel. The major portion of the increase is attributable to yearly increases in costs for the salaries and benefits of existing teachers. For instance, over the last eight years, teachers have received a cumulative wage increase of 43 percent. Additionally, according to the state Division of Budget, employee benefits for city and state workers (pensions, health insurance, federal payroll taxes, unemployment insurance, etc.) now average 48 percent of salary, in contrast to the 27 percent rate estimated by the DOE for 2006–07 school year.¹³ The salary and contractual increases—negotiated between the teachers' union and the city—are beyond the purview of school principals and do not necessarily translate to enhanced arts opportunities for students.

To best illustrate the point, consider that at the middle school level there has been an 18 percent increase in budgeting for personnel over the past three years (Table 3). Yet, at the same time there has been a decline in the number of middle school arts teachers—from 585 certified arts specialists in 2006–07 to 557 in 2008–09.¹⁴

9. New York City Department of Education, *Annual Arts in Schools Report 2008–2009* (New York: Author, 2010): 64.

10. *Ibid.*, 70.

11. *Ibid.*, 30.

12. Kate Pastor, "Rich School, Poor School," *The Village Voice*, April 6, 2010.

13. Empire Center for New York State Policy, "NY Public Payroll Watch, Daily Update," May 10, 2010.

http://nypublicpayrollwatch.com/daily_updates/archives/2010/05/fringe_benefits.html; New York City Department of Education, *Annual Arts in Schools Report 2006–2007* (New York: Author, 2008): 30.

14. See note 9 above.

CONCLUSION

History tells us that during difficult budget times, the arts are often the first subject area to be cut from the school day. However, data presented in this paper point to sharp declines in funding for key areas of arts education that began during a period of significant increases in the overall city education budget and were already underway before the current economic downturn took hold.

We believe the declines in spending on two key areas of arts education owe their origins to two interrelated factors: the effective elimination of a per-pupil dedicated funding line for arts education and the narrowing of the school curriculum due to increased emphasis on high-stakes testing in math and literacy. These two factors, combined with imminent cuts to school budgets, are creating a perfect storm for arts programs in the city's public schools.

Project ARTS served as a catalyst for three specific goals: hiring certified arts teachers, purchasing supplies, and securing services of arts education providers. *Not to be equated with total arts spending in the school system*, this initiative was intended to ensure that every school across the city was providing at least a minimum level of arts education for each and every student. While *ArtsCount* was introduced in the wake of the phasing out of *Project ARTS*, it is clear from the data that the shift in strategies has led to a decline in key areas of arts education. The work of the city's Office of Arts and Special Projects at the DOE is to be commended, and *ArtsCount* has undoubtedly provided the public with the most comprehensive data the school system has seen for arts education. Unfortunately, though, with the elimination of dedicated arts funding a critical safety net has been lost and schools are now spending a fraction of what they previously did on expenditures that were incentivized under *Project ARTS*.

The second key factor in the drastic declines is an accountability system that places disproportionate weight on student achievement on state examinations in just two subject areas—Math and English Language Arts. This limited view of school success and accountability is partly due to shortcomings of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. However, the DOE has implemented policies that have served to enhance the reach of the flawed elements of the legislation. School *Progress Reports*—of which 85 percent of the grade is based on results on state exams—are the basis for school-based rewards and consequences that include principal bonuses of up to \$15,000 and the threat of school closure if students fail to show improvement. The arts, not measured separately, make up only a small portion of the remaining 15 percent of school grades. Given the pressure schools are under to raise test scores, it is not surprising that we are witnessing a shift away from the arts and other elements of a well-rounded education.

When the findings of this paper were presented to DOE staff for comment, they said the declines in budgeting for educational services provided by the city's cultural arts institutions reflected a policy shift to rely less on these institutions and more on school-based staff to provide arts instruction. However, no formal policy change has been announced, and the decisions in question are being made by individual principals at the school level. Moreover, the increase in budgeting for arts personnel has resulted in a gain of only 139 teachers over three years in a system with 2,600 arts teachers at 1,500 schools. The lion's share of the rise in personnel costs is attributable to salary increases and related costs, not new hires. And the policy shift, if that's what it is, does not explain the sharp declines in budgeting for supplies and materials. Certainly, we are compensating teachers more fairly across the board—but this should not come at the expense of the tools that hardworking educators need to provide a well-rounded education.

As school budgets across the city are slated for cuts, it is likely the imbalances will be exacerbated—with students at schools in poor communities being most dramatically impacted. Now more than ever, the DOE, elected leaders, parents and community organizations must reaffirm the importance of arts education as an essential part of the school day and ensure that the arts are not, yet again, disproportionately impacted by school budget cuts.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The DOE should once again hold principals accountable for spending dollars targeted for arts education on arts education. Restoring the per-pupil dedicated funding line for arts education has the support of a wide cross-section of education and child advocates, including the Council of Supervisors and Administrators and the United Federation of Teachers, and would help ensure that students are receiving the arts education to which they are entitled. This is especially important as schools face imminent budget cuts.
- The DOE should create a more balanced *Progress Report* that tracks multiple indicators of good schools. The new indicators should track arts education offerings and participation, as well as whether—and in which areas—a school is or is not in compliance with instructional requirements for the arts. Including the arts as a meaningful part of the accountability system will help put the arts on a level playing field. ■