

**Testimony of the New York City Department of Education on
The Impact of COVID-19 on Arts Instruction, Extracurriculars, and School-Related Social
Activities
Before the NYC Committee on Education**

December 6, 2021

Introduction

Good morning, Chair Treyger and all the Members of the Education Committee here today. I am Lawrence Pendergast, Deputy Chief Academic Officer for Teaching and Learning at the New York City Department of Education (DOE). I am joined today by Maria Palma, Executive Director of the Office of Arts and Special Projects and other DOE colleagues. We are honored to be with you all today to discuss the important topic of arts education and extracurricular activities in NYC public schools.

This Administration is committed to providing all students with a rigorous, robust, culturally-responsive instruction with a full complement of course offerings that includes arts education. The arts—including dance, moving image, music, theater, and visual arts—are essential elements of our students’ learning experience. Arts education provides powerful opportunities for our youth to explore their creative voices, cooperate, concentrate, problem-solve, and other crucial interpersonal and life skills that prepare students for their future careers and engagement in society. Perhaps most importantly, in coping with the pandemic, the arts play an important role in nurturing students’ social-emotional well-being and connectedness to ensembles or other communities of peers.

We are grateful to the City Council for its support of our schools and students, as well as your advocacy for the importance of arts education.

Arts Education Expansion

Since the start of this Administration, we have prioritized equitable arts education for all of New York City’s students. The DOE’s Office of Arts and Special Projects, within DOE’s Division of Teaching and Learning, works tirelessly with our arts content directors and borough-based staff to maximize supports for schools and students. The Arts Office supports citywide content, standards, professional learning, and student programming. The Borough Arts Directors and Coordinators also work with schools and provides customized supports to superintendents and school leaders to help bolster the quality of all arts programming.

Beginning in 2014, we launched a \$23 million city-wide arts education initiative. With the additional annual investment, the Office of Arts and Special Projects was able to expand many successful programs to increase learning opportunities in the arts and foster more equity in access to arts. The cornerstone of quality arts education is found in the robust combination of certified arts teachers, instructional resources, dedicated arts spaces, and partnerships. Here are some of the most effective ways that we have deepened opportunities for arts education across the city:

Certified Arts Teachers

As with all academic content, certified teachers are key to student success and the anchor for arts education in any school. The Arts Matter initiative, launched in 2014, has supported over 120 schools in our City’s highest needs neighborhoods, which previously had only limited access to arts education, by hiring more than 100 new certified arts teachers and building arts programs. Overall, from 2014-20, NYC hired an additional 373 certified arts teachers, who have been absolutely critical in enabling us to expand arts education across the city.

ArtSPACE Grants, Materials, and Studios

Grants for our ArtSPACE program, which stands for “Supporting Performing Arts and Creative Education” has provided 482 schools with auditorium renovations, new “sprung floor” dance studios, stage curtains, audio and visual equipment, visual arts materials, choral risers, music stands, band shells, black box theaters, and ballet barres.

In addition, our annual Arts Studio funding, also launched in 2014, provides money to eligible arts teachers to purchase student art-making resources and equipment. That includes instruments, culturally-responsive art materials, dance shoes, costumes, and stage equipment, as well as remote learning resources like online music software.

Arts Partnership Grants

Our wildly popular Arts Partnership Grants allocate millions of dollars to schools each year, enabling them to partner with arts and cultural organizations that provide direct services for students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and families. The resources and expertise of these organizations have done so much for our students. Just last week, the Office of Arts and Special Projects announced this year’s Arts Partnership Grants, which will enable 223 schools across the five boroughs to partner with 80 different arts and cultural vendors. That number includes 26 projects in District 75 schools.

Teacher and Leader Instructional Resources & Professional Development

To strengthen instruction, the Office of Arts and Special Projects expanded support for arts teachers and leaders, with more than 200 professional learning opportunities serving 2,000 arts educators each year. That includes:

- robust instructional resources;
- content-based professional development;
- new teacher workshops;
- teacher professional learning communities to sustain effective teaching practice;
- resources and professional development for educating students with disabilities and multilingual learners in the arts classroom;
- 3K, Pre-K and Kindergarten arts learning through Create, a collaboration between the Office of Arts and Special Projects, the DOE Division of Early Childhood Education, and four leading arts organizations with expertise in early learning in the arts. (Create was made possible with generous support from Jody and John Arnhold, the New York Community Trust, and Agnes Gund).

The Office of Arts and Special Project’s professional development offerings gained national attention when the office was selected as the recipient of a four-year federal grant for Professional Development for Arts Education that focused on “blended PD”. This award proved especially timely when the pandemic necessitated a pivot to virtual learning. Along with the National Arts Education Association, that office has just been awarded a new five-year grant to lead professional development focusing on equity, diversity, inclusion, and social-emotional learning in the arts classroom.

Impact of Covid

Of course, the global spread of COVID-19 in March 2020 created enormous challenges for our arts education efforts, both fiscally and operationally. Yet despite these challenges, arts teachers managed to do what they do best, create and innovate, and students continued to learn. Despite the monumental challenges of remote instruction, arts teachers engaged New York City’s students in dance, media, music, theater, and visual arts from their living rooms on Zoom. For a glimpse into what remote arts learning looked like over the past year and a half, please take a look at this short video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvTEFE1_Fqo

In the summer of 2020, the Office of Arts and Special Projects provided guidance to schools about instructional practices for in-person arts learning. Throughout the pandemic, we have followed all the latest guidance from the CDC, including social distancing, individualized art materials bins, masks, and prioritized instruction that presented less physical risk, such as music literacy or dance criticism. These precautions proved safe and successful, and we are thrilled that we were further able to restore in-person band this year with the proper PPE, distancing, and ventilation.

The Office of Arts and Special Projects supported teachers throughout the pandemic with online Professional Learning Communities, weekly office hours, on-demand support, technology assistance for remote learning, and leadership assistance. Weekly instructional resources for teachers were posted on TeachHub for dance, music, theater, visual arts, and media as they transitioned to remote and blended teaching. Videotapes of performances and catalogs of student artwork were put online and celebrated virtually. New initiatives, such as the *Songwriters of Tomorrow Scholarship*, were initiated during the pandemic. Examples of student artistic work and achievements during remote and blended learning can be found on the DOE’s website.

City Artist Corps

In spring 2021, in collaboration with the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Office of Arts and Special Projects launched a grant program to expand arts programming for students and partner with artists during the Summer Rising program. Artists engaged students in the creation of incredible murals and innovative outdoor pop-up performances. These grants were catalysts for students and community engagement and provided a vital outlet for students to process their experiences from the last year through creative expression.

Blueprints and NYSED Standards

As a result of the pandemic, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) Arts Learning Standards were waived last school year. As we looked to the full return of students this year though, it is our Blueprints for Teaching and Learning in the Arts, along with the NYSED Arts Learning Standards, that continue to guide the DOE and our teachers with a path to follow for developing culturally-responsive curricula in all arts disciplines. They convey benchmarks for what children should know, understand, and be able to do in dance, moving image, music, theater, and visual arts. In addition, they provide school administrators with the tools they need to share students' accomplishments in these areas with parents.

New York State instructional guidelines and requirements for the arts provide the baseline for our ArtsCount measurements. At the elementary school level, the State Commissioner's Regulations state that every student in every grade should receive annual instruction in all four major branches of the arts: music, theater, dance, and visual arts. They also recommend that 20% of instructional time be devoted to the arts in grades 1-3, and 10% in grades 4-6. While we fully support these recommendations, we also recognize that they are demanding and we have deepened our efforts to help more schools successfully meet them.

At the middle school level, the State requires one semester each of music and visual arts instruction to be provided by a licensed arts teacher over the course of seventh and eighth grades (theater and dance instruction do not fulfill those requirements). For high school students, the State requires completion of two semesters of study in any art form.

We have made significant strides towards meeting this guidance and these requirements throughout this administration. Having all of our students back, in-person, with additional and significant investments in the arts goes a long way towards enhancing this work.

Return to Full-time In-person Learning

With the return to full-time in-person learning this fall, arts teachers welcomed back students to the performing and visual arts classrooms. Our preliminary data shows that the vast majority of arts teachers are again teaching the arts, and we have seen a significant rebound from last year in both the number of teachers and the variety of instruction offered. Schools are returning to their dedicated arts spaces where possible, providing students with the opportunity to again create and rehearse together in shared settings. Schools and educators are following DOE guidance, and as a further precaution, extracurricular arts activities such as school musicals and after school marching band require students to be vaccinated.

American Recovery Plan

To support our students' academic recovery in the arts, the DOE proudly dedicated 20% of the \$350 million academic recovery funding to arts education for this school year. That is the single largest investment in arts education in New York City's history! This funding was allocated progressively, weighing community needs and COVID impacts, so that more funds support

schools and communities hit hardest in the last year and a half. Schools can spend this critical funding for these purposes:

- After-school and weekend student arts programs;
- Arts education direct student services and residencies from arts and cultural organizations;
- Professional development for teachers in arts education;
- Part-time certified arts teachers to enhance arts course offerings;
- Art-making materials and equipment, including instruments. One example being the central grant we have that is currently accepting applications to supply additional music instruments to schools and students that need them.

The federal stimulus funding has also allowed the DOE to fully restore investments in the city-wide arts education advancement budget. That will enable the restoration of student programs, teacher and leader professional development, and individual school funding, including Arts Partnership Grants and the Arts Studio.

The Office of Arts and Special Projects continues to lead professional development for arts teachers and school leaders in the targeted and strategic use of ARPA funds to support academic recovery, students' social emotional well-being, culturally-responsive arts instruction, and re-engaging parents in the school community.

In addition, with the fully realized investment bringing schools' per capita Fair Student Funding to 100% this year, schools have increased funding to hire full-time certified arts teachers. Our preliminary hiring data show 2,766 certified arts teachers in New York City schools in the 2020-21 school year.

We are proud of this once-in-a-generation investment towards equitable arts education across our city, and we are enormously grateful to all of our arts educators and school leaders for leading this work with our students.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge that these successes are built upon the foundation of the remarkable accomplishments of Paul King, who brilliantly led the Office of Arts and Special Projects for 11 years before his passing in February of 2020. He was a tireless and highly effective advocate for students' arts education.

Extracurricular Activities

In addition to our core curriculum, we recognize the importance of extracurricular activities and our academic recovery plan advances our goal of serving the whole child. We have given dedicated funding for expansions in sports and community schools. In addition, with FSF being fully funded, schools finally have the funding they deserve and the discretion to use that towards supporting students and the extracurricular activities that interest each school community.

The Future

The arts and arts education are essential to New York City’s economic engine and recovery. According to a 2019 Comptroller report, *The Creative Economy*, “the creative sector accounts for thirteen percent of the city’s total economic output. In total, one out of every eight dollars of economic activity in the city—\$110 billion in 2017—can be traced directly or indirectly to the sector.” The arts are also a robust career pathway for New York City’s students, as well as a generator of lifelong skills that enable them to thrive and gain enjoyment throughout their adulthood.

Our Arts Strategic Plan, which was developed over the course of a year with feedback from diverse stakeholders—parents, students, teachers, school leaders, representatives from higher education and arts and cultural organizations—provides a forward-facing blueprint for fully realizing equitable access to a high quality, sequential arts education. It underscores the centrality of increased hiring of certified arts teachers, who are the cornerstone of a high-quality arts education for all students. Thoughtful investment in school partnerships with local art and cultural organizations are also essential. We are already taking steps to put pieces of this plan in motion, which must be coupled with dedicated funding to ensure that a quality arts education is a reality for all students from Pre-K through twelfth grade.

I thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony, and I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.



New York Hall of Science



New York City Council
Education Committee Oversight Hearing
December 6, 2021

Title: Oversight - Impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic on Arts Instruction, Extracurriculars, and School-Related Social Activities.

Thank you Chair Treyger for your time and work for this Committee. The New York Hall of Science appreciates the Committee's attention to this issue, and I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this important topic.

The COVID-19 Pandemic caused institutions worldwide to deeply examine and reimagine their work, and the New York Hall of Science (NYSCI) was no exception. The crises we faced over the past, almost two years, have strengthened our core convictions. It shifted how we presented our material from an in-person format to an online platform that is inclusive of the various realities and real-life situations many families experienced, especially in areas hit the hardest like the "epicenter" of the pandemic, Corona, in which NYSCI resides.

NYSCI's educators, community engagement team, youth development staff, exhibit designers, and researchers pivoted in extraordinary ways to support our communities—and continue to do so—through a rigorous planning process to ensure that science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education is accessible to all. Our focus was creating experiences that enable young people from diverse backgrounds to feel confident and empowered as STEM learners. We reimaged our core fundamentals of Design Make Play and translated this to an online platform with predominantly informal learning environments. Additionally, beyond our walls, we strived to ensure our local community of Corona, along with other cultural and non-profit organizations that work locally, would be experienced as a significant community resource.

NYSCI responded to this crisis by establishing the Elmhurst Corona Recovery Collaborative (ECRC), which consists of more than twenty local organizations working together to create opportunities for depth and reach across a broad array of issues. Instruction cannot occur if our students and their families are experiencing a devastating health crisis, coupled with economic hardship, learning loss due to school closures, and isolation from crucial community networks. Our collective response to the pandemic was to establish working groups that tackled areas of critical need, including access to healthcare, with a focus on mental health, immigrant rights, food security, and educational and cultural experiences designed to build resilience. Participating organizations have distributed over 600,000 meals, provided access to COVID testing, helped residents understand the importance of vaccinations, and provided COVID and



flu shots. Together, we have helped move the vaccination rate in the Corona and Elmhurst communities from a low of 27% to over 90%.

NYSCI NEIGHBORS COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

NYSCI's community outreach team made sure families had the technology and know-how to get their children set up on the DOE's remote learning platforms, as well as providing enriching virtual resources and support. We built out our "Parent Ambassador" Facebook group as a trusted resource for those in our community looking for bilingual information about helping their children learn at home. Activities included:

- Engaging families through short, bilingual "Making at Home" videos and live zoom sessions that feature creative interactive learning activities that can be done with household items.
- Creating opportunities for skill-building, connection, and reflection among parents through virtual "Cafecito" events.
- Maintaining a relationship with NYSCI's regular afterschool families through a Virtual Homework Zone where they can continue building healthy homework habits.
- Creating a bilingual (English/Spanish) storytime geared towards early learners that guides parents through a family activity, making connections to STEM learning.
- Distributing over 1,000 DIY activity kits to local families in food relief packages.

YOUTH AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staying true to our vision to develop a generation of curious, confident citizens who ask hard questions, reflect on the world around them, and offer creative solutions for tomorrow's biggest challenges, the Friedman Center for the Development of Young Scientists has transitioned in-person student programming and events to virtual platforms. 193% of participating youth, who are predominantly from Queens, have opted to continue their engagement virtually. Activities include:

- Engaging youth ("Explainers") in regular training and professional development sessions help youth deepen their science communication skills and broaden skills and confidence in STEM subject matter (Daily, M-F).
- Creating working groups that leverage Explainers' expertise and experiences to update program materials, develop virtual STEM-focused content, and support the evolution of NYSCI's exhibits and activities.
- Offering free skill-building workshops in college readiness and career topics for Explainers and students across NYC.



- Connecting students with STEM professionals to expand the ways they think about STEM careers (e.g., Career Conversations).
- Developing virtual content that highlights the museum's exhibits and demonstrations to serve Queens youth who won't be able to travel to the museum next school year.

SUPPORTING NYC EDUCATORS AND SCHOOLS

New York City teachers and school administrators know they can turn to NYSCI for support during this unprecedented time. Actions NYSCI took included:

- Conducting interactive virtual science workshops with students from schools and community-based organizations on various science topics.
- Conducting teacher professional development training online, including supporting teachers in delivering online learning.
- Developing a free remote learning resource called Science Learning Series, consisting of 15-minute videos demonstrating science concepts aligned with standards as well as facilitation guides for teachers and worksheets for students.
- Formatting computational thinking work for distance learning and providing virtual educator training for students in grades 2-5 at PS13.
- Implementing an app design apprenticeship program for high school students in partnership with ExpandEd Schools.
- Developing and curating a vast array of resources for the NYSCI website and social media channels on ways to bring STEM activities into families' homes, including resources designed for children with developmental disabilities.

IMPACT

New York City students rely on the various cultural institutions, non-profit organizations, programs, and resources to strengthen engagement and learning opportunities. When the City needed us, the New York cultural community came together to support and continue to provide educational and essential services to our students and communities. Even though we pivoted quickly to online instruction, ongoing programming, and becoming a community resource, the economic reality is harsh.

In the last 21 months, NYSCI has lost an estimated five million in earned revenue and had to lay off 55% of our total staff. This estimate includes anticipated increases in expenditures, lost revenue from charges and fees, reduced salaries, and loss of staff. These cuts have been made



New York Hall of Science



taking into account cost-saving measures, the use of federal relief programs, and the increased generosity of our private donors.

As well, NYSCI faces a newer challenge due to Hurricane Ida. It is unfortunate that in such a short time of our ability to reopen we were forced to close our doors once again due to major structural damage. Despite this, NYSCI continues to ensure that students are connected to our online forums, and through our work with the ECRC, we offer mental health services, immigrant rights assistance, and other essential supporting services. Long term, to continue with our mission, we need the continued support of our city government and grants.

Two years is a long time to be shuttered, the community, the borough, the City will only have a full recovery when our doors are open once again and our young people can experience our programs in person.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Synopsis of NYCATA's testimony to the New York City Council's Committee on Education Oversight hearing on the "Impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic on Arts Instruction, Extracurriculars, and School-Related Social Activities."

Mario Asaro, Executive Chair NYC Art teachers Association/UFT "Impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic on Arts Instruction, Extracurriculars, and School-Related Social Activities."

"..... Funding is crucial for the arts education, The importance of funding to secure licensed arts specialists in every school and to secure funding needed for supplies and equipment to implement a rigorous and sequential curriculum is real. I thank our city leaders who have worked to secure and safeguard such funding. Today I want to testify on an issue that the pandemic has made clear and that is that class size is not only a better way to reach our students but now clearly a public health issue as well. Class size has not been addressed by the city since 1938.

As a lifelong middle school art teacher of over 33 years I can personally say that while competitive salary and budget to support and implement our programs are important, both are not effective without the ability to authentically engage our students in smaller class settings. The frustration we face when trying to connect, reach and manage 30 plus students in a studio hands on environment that typically meets for an average 40 minute block is one of the biggest hurdles for authentic learning faced by students and the teachers alike and changing that culture will not only make our schools safer, they will make them better place to work and learn in, our students will benefit most when we have the time and space to properly and safely nurture and engage their creative spirits as well as their social emotional and academic growth.

Today I am urging our city leaders and policy makers to support legislation that will have the greatest impact on our classroom teachers and the most benefit for our students across the board and that is reducing class size.

Thank you
Mario Asaro
NYCATA/UFT
Executive Chair
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ADVANCE | MORE OPERA

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Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Education

Impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic on Arts Instruction, Extracurriculars, and School-Related Social
Activities
T2021-8253

Submitted by

Cheryl Warfield

Professional Opera Singer, Teaching Artist, Producer and Founder of ADVANCE/MORE Opera

Monday, December 6, 2021

Greetings. Thank you, Chair Treyger, Majority Leader Cumbo and Members of City Council for reading my testimony. I am Cheryl Warfield, an African American opera singer who has performed on Broadway and at the Metropolitan Opera. I am a 20+ year teaching artist for K-12 students in all five boroughs, and I also run a small nonprofit, ADVANCE/MORE Opera that delivers educational and cultural outreach to youth in underserved communities. I am writing to present my perspective as a teaching artist and arts administrator on the importance of the arts and culture ecosystem to NYC schools and to urge the development of stronger, more inclusive nonprofit partnerships in education.

Arts learning builds stronger bonds, improves academic achievement, and provides the skills needed to thrive in life. The time is now for New York to make a long-term commitment to the emotional and intellectual well-being of all NYC students using the power of arts and culture by:

1. Making the arts a vital part of the everyday school experience for every child.
2. Ensuring arts education funding is adequate and equitable.
3. Expanding arts education collaboration, partnerships, and recruitment, including small nonprofits and BIPOC led organizations.

This requires a renewed commitment among educators, legislators, parents, and other partners and stakeholders, to ensure that future generations receive adequate arts and culture during the school day. The National Endowment for the Arts' most recent Survey of Public Participation in the arts found that after a steady trend of increased arts education in the 20th century, access to arts education has been declining for the past three decades. In another national survey, more than half of educators reported that the arts were receiving less instructional time and resources.

Universal access to arts education is an issue of equity and should be approached with the same rigor and urgency as other educational initiatives in New York. Every student who attends a public school in NYC should be afforded every opportunity to participate in quality arts education programs as part of their regular school day. This is imperative for students from low-income areas, as they often benefit from robust arts activities more than their counterparts of privileged in my experience.

In June, the U.S. Department of Education issued a report documenting the effects of COVID-19 on American students. Not surprising, the report notes that the pandemic has deepened inequities in the education system and has been particularly harmful to the educational development of

Cheryl Warfield
December 6, 2021
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underprivileged and at-risk youth. Again, the arts and culture can help provide a stop gap to current inequities.

In April 2020, during lockdown, my organization pivoted to virtual afterschool programming. In July, 2020, we partnered with Summer in the City, a coalition of arts and culture organizations to provide eight weeks and 19,000 hours of free virtual programming to over 1,000 NYC public school students. More than 125 classes were presented online from the Guggenheim Museum and Morgan Library to the Staten Island Zoo and Queens Botanical Garden, and from smaller nonprofits like mine. ADVANCE's program "Black Lives Matter: Songs for George – the Music of Protest" provided an emotional outlet for students where they wrote music and lyrics about themselves and explored their feelings about what was going on in their world. One student with disabilities wrote an original song about losing a beloved teacher to COVID-19. Another student wrote new lyrics to the song "Lean on Me" about coping with anxiety. It was a cathartic experience for all.

My organization has provided services to three key NYC agencies over the years, the Department of Education, Youth and Community Development, and Cultural Affairs (Su Casa for older adults). Our expertise is finding solutions for the educational and cultural gaps within our diverse communities. But we were not included in the ARPA programs through Cultural Affairs.

Small organizations, especially BIPOC led nonprofits with capacity to provide core arts services to underserved communities need a seat at the table. Diverse perspectives should play a substantive role in determining how best to maximize the benefits of the ARPA to those who need it the most.

Greater efforts to identify, coordinate and connect individual teaching artists and small arts organizations to schools is necessary, especially to support those schools with little or no arts programming prior to FY 2022. Arts education, properly supported and available to all, can play a vital role in NYC's recovery, and provide greater educational equity for children in underserved communities.

I wish to thank Chancellor Porter and the Department of Education for their historic \$70M investment in arts learning. Investment of this size must be continued in future fiscal years. Our children deserve it, and our future depends on it. Thank you for reading my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

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CHIKÉ OKONKWO

DIANE PAULUS

LIEV SCHREIBER

SHERIE RENE SCOTT

CINDY TOLAN

TESTIMONY TO NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

December 6, 2021

My name is Jaime Hastings and I am the Executive Director of the Arthur Miller Foundation, a non-profit organization that honors the legacy of the great American playwright, Arthur Miller, and his NYC public school education, which was founded by Arthur's daughter, writer and filmmaker, Rebecca Miller. AMF provides increased equity and access to quality theater education for public school students. On behalf of Rebecca and AMF we would like to convey our sincere appreciation for the value you place on arts education as a crucial component of a core educational experience for our 1.1 million New York City public school students. We know that together we can foster the students of today to become the forward-thinking, creative problem-solvers of tomorrow.

We are proud that 78 NYC DOE theater teachers are part of the Arthur Miller Foundation Fellows Program, in partnership with Office of Arts and Special Projects. **Over the last 5 years, the Arthur Miller Foundation has contributed approximately \$1.5M to our theater education program.** Program participants— theater teachers named “Arthur Miller Fellows”—receive over \$30,000 in dedicated support to build sustainable theater programs at their schools through professional mentorship, cultural partner residencies, teaching resources, classroom materials, Broadway tickets for students, and ongoing professional development. The program has now impacted nearly 40,000 public school students across all 5 boroughs of NYC.

Each of our Fellows are extraordinary, as they belong to one in about 20% of NYC DOE schools with a certified theater teacher. That is about 200 theater teachers out of 1800 schools. After a \$15.5M budget cut to arts education last year, we fear those reductions will have lasting negative impacts on theater education, reversing the progress that has been made to this point. We hope that our Fellows will see no change in their employment status for the coming years. **I am here to request that any budget cuts we face do not affect the 200 theater teachers in our public schools and the in-school theater programming they provide, as budget reductions could disproportionately affect the arts teachers who are already severely underrepresented throughout NYC.** While it was a victory to receive \$70 million of American Rescue Plan Act funds designated specifically for arts education programs, and we thank Chancellor Porter for this historic investment, we also recognize that the funding is a temporary, one-year increase. Organizations like the Arthur Miller Foundation will need to continue fighting for arts education (theater, dance, music and visual arts) to have an equitable seat at the education table.

At this time, perhaps more than any other, we must continue giving a voice to all our young people— particularly our Black and Brown students who make up the majority of the NYC DOE student population; they deserve the access to theater which is rightfully theirs.

A dedicated theater teacher is a great asset for NYC students and other school faculty members: an arts professional who creates a safe space where students can be their authentic selves; someone who provides consistency and cultivates a sense of community. A thoughtful theater education program also supports the crucial [Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks](#) outlined by the New York State Education Department, which are activated through the theater process: building trust and empowering students by integrating their mind, body, and voice. These skills are key in providing our students with trauma-informed care as they transition back to school.

We believe it is time to deem arts education an essential component of a core academic education for our youth. Evidence reveals that theater class gives students an outlet to funnel anxiety and stress through creative expression by providing them with a constructive way to channel those emotions, particularly in the midst of this pandemic that is disproportionately affecting New York City and our students of color. AMF continued to support our Fellows in reaching all of their students throughout remote learning last year and has not only restored our budget to pre-COVID levels, but increased funding for our theater education programs.

As we look to the future together, we are here, and we are prepared to continue providing the support the DOE needs for our theater teachers and students. After all, that is what a theater community is for. But in order to do our part, we must ensure that the Office of Arts & Special Projects and the arts education infrastructure—especially arts teachers—are not lost and that the DOE is able to continue hiring certified arts teachers. **Thank you for recognizing that arts education is a right, not a privilege.**



New York City Arts in Education Roundtable

Written Testimony - Committee on Education Oversight Hearing

Thank you Chair Treyger and the Committee on Education for your leadership and commitment to arts education. Thank you to Maria, Trenton, and the entire Office of Arts & Special Projects, who work tirelessly for our young people. My name is Kimberly Olsen, and I am the Executive Director of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable and proud teaching artist working at P396K in Brownsville, Brooklyn.

The Roundtable is a non-profit service organization working to improve and advance arts education in NYC schools and beyond.

First and foremost, we wish to thank Chancellor Porter for her historic investment in standards-based arts instruction via ARPA Academic Recovery. By prioritizing arts education, the DOE helps ensure our city's young people have the rigor, encouragement, and inspiration they need to learn and thrive in today's classroom.

While we celebrate this step forward, we recognize it is a temporary one. It has been 20 years since the No Child Left Behind Act defined "arts" as a "core academic subject," and six years since the Every Student Succeeds Act declared the arts as part of a "well-rounded education". However, in the great city of New York, we have not defined how to sustain arts education for ALL students.

After this school year, what next? Under-investment in Arts Education in NYC has been recurrent. Prior to COVID-19, 67% of principals noted funding for the arts was generally insufficient. 65% of NYC middle school students were not meeting the state Arts Learning Requirements by the end of their eighth grade year. Currently, there is no requirement that schools spend Arts Supplemental Funding for Fair Student Funding on the arts (the School Allocation Memo is a recommendation).

We seek City Council's help to make it possible for all students to receive an education they need and deserve. To achieve universal access to arts education, we believe the city must:

- 1) Work with the DOE to reinstate required funding for arts learning akin to Project Arts.
- 2) Prioritize funding the Office of Arts & Special Projects Strategic Arts Plan to set us on the path to close the equity gap.
- 3) Increase accountability by mandating the arts be part of every school's Comprehensive Education Plan.

- 4) Establish policy to increase the hiring and availability of certified arts educators, especially those from underrepresented groups. Every school deserves a certified arts teacher.

Separately, the Roundtable wishes to uplift the importance of field trips for our city's students and need for clarity. According to the most recent [NYC Department of Education's Arts in Schools Report](#) (p. 54), 32% of schools reported bringing their students on Arts-Related Field Trips in the 2019-2020 school year — nearly 400 schools across all five boroughs. For many students, a field trip may be their first experience outside of their neighborhood or borough. Research shows that students who participate in a field trip to a cultural organization show increased empathy, tolerance, critical thinking skills, and positive attitudes towards learning.

Student academic and social-emotional benefits aside, field trips also make up an essential part of the cultural economy. However, prolonged delays and lack of clarity about field trip guidance are leaving many organizations in crisis. These organizations, already struggling from the financial impact of the past 20 months, are being forced to cancel these opportunities without clear guidance about hosting school-age audiences.

We're grateful for the support of the Manhattan Borough President's Office and City Council District 26 staff in helping the Roundtable learn of recent guidance updates, yet the NYC DOE has been reluctant to share information directly with the arts organizations and arts vendors who host these school audiences. We know guidelines exist related to field trips, yet this information is only listed within InfoHub — a password-protected online portal for NYC DOE staff and administrators. Arts organizations providing these critical experiential learning opportunities are ultimately left in the dark. As guidance continues to change due to Executive Order 250 and organization's ability to enforce vaccination requirements, organizations are making decisions with huge financial implications based on second-hand information from school teachers or administrators.

We seek City Council's support to call on the NYC DOE to share field trip guidance publicly and directly with arts vendors. We hope these guidelines will also share information on *how* organizations requiring proof of vaccination can work with schools to gather this information, ensuring a safe arts experience for all. We appreciate your assistance and support to ensure that arts organizations are able to continue providing local tourism opportunities for NYC's young people.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Direct testimony from Edward Miller, Program Manager at ArtsConnection, to the Education Committee of the NYC City Council. December 6, 2021

My name is Edward Miller, and I'm a Program Manager at ArtsConnection. ArtsConnection is one of the oldest arts education organizations in the city, and since 1979, it has been providing arts programming in theater, dance, music, visual art, puppetry, spoken word, photography and more to NYC Public Schools in all five boroughs. We work in about 100 schools a year and have some multi-year partnerships with schools where we've worked, in some cases, for decades.

Since the start of the pandemic, ArtsConnection has been working to deliver arts programming to NYC school children who have been traumatized by Covid-19 and the related chaos. Research shows that arts programming is pivotal in helping kids deal with and heal from trauma. An article published in *Education Week* in 2016 by Heidi Durham, CEO of Art with Heart, a Seattle-based nonprofit dedicated to helping children overcome trauma through creative expression, cites several studies showing the profound healing effects that artmaking has for children recovering from trauma. She mentions a Drexel University study that shows that "the simple act of artmaking, regardless of skill level, reduces cortisol (or stress levels) in the brain." Many other studies show similar results. I personally have seen during Covid that engaging students in projects that allow them to tell their own stories, participate in culturally relevant arts activities, and work in the arts on a differentiated basis has helped students deal with their trauma by giving them control over their narratives at a time when control helped everyone with the global chaos, allowing them to have agency, and providing them with teaching that allowed each individual to have success.

I have had direct experience witnessing the healing power of the arts. In the winter of 2020, an ArtsConnection remote family event at PS 68R allowed students from multiple schools and their families to gather together for a multidisciplinary arts experience in which everyone took part in a visual arts project by making a dancing stick, then used that to participate in learning culturally specific dances from Jamaica, China, and India, then reflected on the experience with the teaching artists. The families were engaged together in the activities, students had many questions for the artists, and students were excited to see their peers. In the 2020-2021 academic year, a remote musical theater residency at

P168X made possible through a CASA grant brought together students who were working at home and in the classroom to learn dance and music. The remarkable thing about that residency was how everyone worked together: parents, family members, teachers, paras, related service providers and teaching artists all united so that every student found a way to participate, feel confident and connect with their peers. For instance, one student was able, through direct help from her sister in person and online encouragement by the artist, classroom teacher and speech therapist, to sound out the chorus to a song; previously she had been nonverbal. This happened over and over again with children on the spectrum. The truly striking thing about this was that this multidimensional learning environment comprised of family members and educators helped students on the spectrum in ways that not only helped them deal with pandemic-related matters, but also with issues they had not been able to

surmount pre-pandemic. The implications of this discovery that a mixed personal and professional matrix allows for next-level breakthroughs in children on the spectrum are truly stunning and bear further research and work. In the same school year, a remote residency in theater at MS 228K taught students to improvise scenes online, and toward the end of the residency they were able to meet in the classroom together in-person to finish videos about what they dreamed of doing after the Covid crisis was over. In each case, students were compelled to turn on their cameras and engage with the arts project. In this case, shy students we had worked with and seen before the pandemic were excited to work with each other once they got together in person, and the positive anticipation was a stress-reliever and helped them cope with the pandemic.

Federal funding has been critical in delivering programs like these. Through a PPP loan, it allowed ArtsConnection to create a multi-month Think Tank focusing on remote learning in early days of the pandemic. We hired staff and artists to explore and hone skills needed for remote learning, develop models for remote teaching (asynchronous, synchronous and hybrid), develop remote multi-discipline family events, brainstorm new and thoughtful ways to bring teens together remotely (and now, in person), and develop technical skills to deliver arts programming.

Without funding like this, I'm extremely worried about what may happen. There is no question in my mind that the pandemic has severely and negatively affected arts and cultural organizations across the city. It has felt like a wildfire went through the community and only the luckiest organizations survived. Many organizations have had to fire or furlough staff, curtail or reimagine existing programs, and rethink partnerships with schools. I have witnessed months-long delays in educators being able to provide arts programming. Due to ongoing uncertainties related to Covid, school and office closures during outbreaks, unforeseen sudden pandemic needs that sapped funds, and the like, our New York City children have been denied arts programming that is essential in helping them process and heal from the trauma of this pandemic that has ravaged our New York City community. Without financial help to struggling organizations, it might prove impossible to provide essential arts programming across the city. In my written comments, I have included here a report from the Center for an Urban Future that details the devastation to the community and the importance of funding organizations, especially BIPOC-led and smaller community-based organizations, as we recover from the effects of the pandemic.

<https://nycfuture.org/research/surveying-nycs-arts-after-covid>

When the pandemic lockdown went into effect, I was shocked and panicked. I really thought that the city would just roll up the carpet, lock the doors and fire all the teachers, especially arts teachers and teaching artists. ArtsConnection came into being because of such a fiscal crisis in the 1970s. City government at that time could not afford to hire back all the art teachers they had fired, and so they devised a system whereby they hired artists directly to come into the schools and conduct arts residencies. Creating this system and allowing artists through outside arts organizations to work in the schools was a brilliantly clever way to keep the arts in the schools. It proved that the arts are essential to the education of students. I have been grateful to work with the school system through this crisis, and I

am looking forward to working together with elected officials and city agencies to build on the truly unique, adaptive and creative ways to bring arts to the students of the New York City school system that we have developed during the pandemic.

With extra funding, the scope of arts programming can be enlarged, and educators can be empowered and resourced to help kids heal. I stand ready to help with this task, and I have witnessed the intentions of the courageous and caring NYC public education community who want to help. Schools are short-staffed but eager to find help in dealing with trauma in creative and engaging ways.

I think the City Council can help by:

- Providing arts funding to schools and also ARPA or PPP money to support outside cultural and arts organizations that directly provide arts programming to schools.
- Making sure that there is a safe environment to conduct in-person learning at every school.
- Continuing the great and essential funding through CASA grants and grants from the Office of Arts and Special Projects.
- By supporting a state law that makes arts learning part of the core curriculum for teaching.

I have and will continue to work with school administrators, classroom teachers and teaching artists to bring programming of cultural significance that supports student voice, diversity, equity, inclusion and artistic rigor that addresses the social emotional learning, fine motor skills and artistic expression of students. I stand ready to help find creative solutions to help our vibrant and committed education committee address the effects of this pandemic on our children.

Edward Miller, Program Manager

ArtsConnection, 520 8th Avenue, Suite 321

New York, New York 10018

millere@artsconnection.org, 917-549-9155

From: Ava Kinsey <akinsey@BAM.org>
Sent: Monday, December 6, 2021 11:27 AM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Hearing/Committee on Education Testimony

Good morning. I am Ava Kinsey, Director of Education at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

New York is a home for artists. People venture to New York from other states and other countries for the promise of a dream that dares to be actualized.

The arts in this incredible city is a distinct and necessary ecosystem that begins in schools with young people and arts educators and nourishes the whole of New York.

Arts education, teaching artists, & arts administrators have been more invaluable than ever in bringing our city back from this trying time.

During the height of the pandemic in 2020, it was Brooklyn Academy of Music's Education Department that was essential to our organization's continued work. Our mainstage performances were hit hard by closures that effected the livelihood of BAM and our employees. In the midst of this our young people continued to "show up" to our online programs. They stated that the constant of the programs brought a sense of normalcy and much-needed social interaction, however virtual.

Institutions like BAM and those my colleagues represent are vital to providing rigorous, intentional, trauma-informed, culturally-responsive, and inclusive arts education to area young people. At the beginning of the pandemic the systemic structural and societal ills of this country were exposed. So, not having funding secured will mean our young people in several underserved DOE districts will continue to go without, but we dare not go back to the world we had before.

Funding that artistic ecosystem beyond just this year can help us create curriculum that addresses these issues and cultivates a holistic processing of what we all continue to live through.

That arts ecosystem extends and lives in this virtual space with us today. For it is here that that ecosystem can be nurtured and made to thrive. By continuing to approve funding for arts education, you are investing in the youth who are the future and the "now" of New York City.



Testimony to the Committee on Education of the New York City Council, December 6 2021

**Kwame Brandt-Pierce, After School & Summer Program Manager
Brooklyn Children's Museum (BCM)**

Good morning. I'm Kwame Brandt-Pierce, Manager of After School and Summer Programs at Brooklyn Children's Museum in Crown Heights. I currently manage a K-5 program for the museum at PS 189 in Brownsville. This city funded program serves about 250 children annually and is offered entirely free of charge.

Our educators provide arts, science, and academic enrichment through activities such as animation, creative writing, and engineering. We also provide Social Emotional Learning programs teaching children effective ways to communicate, resolve conflict, and deal with frustrating or fearful emotions.

This work has always been important to our community, but never more so than during the pandemic. In the summer of 2020, when many programs were closed, Brooklyn Children's Museum ran a full-day, in person summer camp from 8:00am to 6:00pm Monday through Friday. The Museum also offered a remote and in-person after school program at PS 189 during the school year of 2020-2021 as most parents were returning to work.

I can't emphasize how essential this program is to our families. Most of our parents can't afford safe and reliable childcare and the 2:30 school dismissal time makes it difficult for them to consistently pick up their children while also holding down a full time job. Demand for our program at PS 189 has always been high and we currently have a waiting list of over 200 children for the present school year.

This past summer, BCM operated a free summer camp at PS 189. The City funded us for 77 camp slots, but more than 400 families submitted applications. In an effort to serve as many children as possible during this extraordinary time, BCM expanded its program to 102 students – with good faith assurances from the City that they would compensate the Museum for additional staff and materials. To date however, the City has not made good on their promise to compensate us for this work. It is imperative that organizations like BCM, that provide essential services for families, be paid for their work in a timely way so that we can continue to serve as many children as possible with high-quality arts, culture, and science programs.

I want to take a moment to especially thank Council Members Alicka Ampry-Samuel and Farah Louis for their support of programs at our museum, and Council Members Mark Treyger and Brad Lander for their support of BCM's work as part of the Brooklyn delegation.

Good morning all and thank you for this opportunity. I come to you today wearing a few different hats: I am the senior director of education and family programs at BRIC, a board member of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable, and a CUNY grad student completing a thesis project focusing on the relationships between city agencies and arts and cultural nonprofits for arts education services in public schools. For over 20 years, it has been my sincere pleasure to work to help expand opportunities for learning in the arts for the city's students and families.

When schools shut down back in March of 2020, we reached out to our school and community partners to see how we could be of service. In June, BRIC launched "One Brooklyn TV", a project in collaboration with the DOE to broadcast 15 hours per week of educational content on our HD cable channel. This work continues, and to date, we have broadcast well over 800 hours of content for students and families. At the same time, we were notified by the DOE that all existing purchase orders for arts residencies would be halted for the remainder of the school year and that the process of renewing our MTAC vendor contract would also be paused. This caused significant loss of revenue we had been counting on and our vendor contract has still yet to be finalized now over two years after our proposal was first submitted. Since this summer, we have also seen a significant slowdown in the processing of DOE fingerprinting clearances for staff, which has been a serious issue. We understand that we are all continuing to navigate through difficult times, and these challenges have had negative consequences for not only my organization but also the field at large.

With the ARPA funding and restoration of city budget cuts this year, now we are seeing increased demand for our services. This means more work for teaching artists, which is great

because they experienced many of the worst financial impacts of the pandemic, but it also means increased workloads for our administrative staff and more pressure on our own fundraising efforts. The funds we receive from the DOE and DCLA for arts education programs require that we supplement with our own revenues in order to have adequate resources for successful program delivery. As a field we are used to some degree of fluctuation in available funding from year to year, but there is concern that we are making significant investment in partnerships with schools that may not continue next year when funding likely returns to a more normal level.

I urge you to consider reinstating the practice of a dedicated line item in each school's operating budget earmarked for arts education. Previously known as Project ARTS, this practice would allow schools and cultural partners to plan more long-term and more strategically. I also urge the DOE to prioritize funding for schools that do not have a certified arts teacher on staff, and those without existing cultural partnerships. NYC is the center of arts and culture, we absolutely should not have public school students in our city who do not receive arts instruction.

Thank you again, and I look forward to sharing additional findings from my thesis research project in the near future.



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
December 9, 2021

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Jeanne Houck, and I am the Executive Director for the Creative Arts Team at CUNY, serving all 51 Council Districts in New York City.

Jeanne Houck, Ph.D.
Executive Director

The mission of the Creative Arts Team (CAT) is to use theatre and interactive drama as a catalyst to address academic and social issues. Founded in 1974, CAT delivers programs that promote literacy, college and career readiness, social-emotional learning, violence prevention, conflict resolution, and arts learning. CAT works with over 18,000 New Yorkers at 180 schools and community sites annually, delivering programs to Pre-K-12th grade students and educators, college students, parents, and adults.

Chris Vine
Artistic & Education Advisor
Academic Director,
CUNY MA in Applied Theatre

CAT has been trusted to deliver our culturally responsive, trauma-informed pedagogy at the height of the AIDS crisis and immediately after 9/11, and has continued to do so during the COVID-19 pandemic. CAT has adapted curricula to help meet the social-emotional and academic needs of students and educators due to COVID-19, and is currently delivering both in-person and virtual programs to teachers, parents, public school students, and college students.

Advisory Council

Stephen R. Aiello
Elyse Buxbaum
Charlotte Frank
Joanne Halev
David R. Jones
Steven L. Krause
Sandra A. Lamb
Jack Lusk
Nancy Walker

During July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021, CAT facilitated programming at 99 schools and sites (virtually!) for 2,645 sessions with 8,729 unique pre-k through college students and 2,082 unique adults/community members for a total of 10,811 unique participants. The types of projects CAT facilitates fall under the categories of Academic & Social Literacy, Community & Theatre Making, Leadership Development Programs, and Social Emotional Learning.

Lynda Zimmerman
Founding Executive Director

Nancy F. Swartzell
In Memoriam

With the new 2021-22 school year, CAT teaching artists are engaging students and adults in drama, history, arts, and literacy curricula, as well as facilitating workshops that explore topics including staying on track in your education, managing boundaries, and bettering communication skills. We are continuing our college readiness programs with weekly residencies that support building skills in literacy and learning United States immigration history. Because of CAT's participant-centered pedagogy and expertise in using theatre to facilitate conversations and strategies for processing loss and finding hope, we are joining arts and culture organizations throughout the city in using the arts as a tool for moving forward as a society and as citizens.

While studies show that arts engagement improves educational, social, and emotional outcomes, the same studies show that arts access is limited for those who need it most (Kisida & Bowen, 2019). To bridge this gap, CAT creates spaces with 15,000 pre-k through college students and educators/caregivers annually to facilitate open and transparent conversations where participants recognize their power to problem-solve and try new strategies.

With the ongoing support and dialogue with the City Council being essential, arts and cultural experiences for all New York City students are going to continue to fuel a vibrant New York City, improve mental health for families, and engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding and we thank the city council for being central partners in this work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Jeanne Houck'.

Jeanne Houck, PhD



**Testimony to City Council Committee on Education: Oversight - Impact of the COVID-19
Pandemic on Arts Instruction, Extracurriculars, and School-Related Social Activities**

Submitted to City Council Committee on Education on December 6, 2021

Prepared by Dance/NYC

Presented by Sarah Cecilia Bukowski, Research & Advocacy Assistant

On behalf of Dance/NYC (www.dance.nyc), a service organization that serves over 5,000 individual dance artists, 1,200 dance-making entities, and 500 non-profit dance companies and the many for profit dance businesses based in the metropolitan New York City area, including BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Color) dance workers, immigrants, and disabled dance workers. Dance/NYC embeds the values of justice, equity, and inclusion into all aspects of its operations and frames the following requests through the lens of those values. Dance/NYC joins colleague advocates working across creative disciplines in thanking you for your leadership and requesting:

- 1. The instatement of the arts as a core subject in New York City schools;**
- 2. To prioritize funding for the Office of Arts & Special Projects Strategic Arts Plan to secure equitable access to high-quality universal arts education; and**
- 3. To adequately and sustainably fund arts education services, which directly supports partnerships and after school programs through the Department of Cultural Affairs and Department of Youth & Community Development.**

New York is one of only 19 states that do not require the arts as a core subject for public school students, despite the fact that 91% of Americans believe the arts are a vital part of a well-rounded education (<https://bit.ly/IPSOSArtEducationSurvey>). State and federal initiatives to support requirements for arts in education are gaining momentum to strengthen investments in arts instruction beyond recommendations to individual districts and school principals. As the largest school system in the nation, New York City schools have the opportunity to lead the way by making the arts—including dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts—a core subject in all



City schools. Students are recovering from the impacts of the pandemic on their learning, and arts education is a key component in strengthening student well-being and overall academic achievement and must continue through every student's future education. Even as arts instruction continued throughout the pandemic, budget cuts have limited schools' capacity to deliver equitable, quality arts education and devastated partnerships with arts and cultural organizations, and funding must be restored and increased to recoup these losses.

The benefits of arts education are well documented and wide-ranging. According to New Victory Theater's recent report, *Spark Change: Investing in performing arts education for all* (<https://bit.ly/NewVictorySparkChangeReport>), performing arts education supports social and emotional well being—essential in the pandemic's climate of precarity—while fostering creativity, critical thinking, team-building skills, self-reflection, and communication to prepare future leaders to face new and persistent challenges. Arts programming fosters a welcoming, creative school environment, and arts partnerships and after school programs support students and their families to participate as engaged members of their communities. This evidence makes it abundantly clear that arts education is not a luxury—it is essential to student learning, well being, and social and civic engagement. Making the arts part of the core curriculum of New York City schools would set requirements for alignment with state standards and include a combination of in-school certified arts teachers and partnerships with arts and cultural organizations, all of which directly benefits students, educators, and arts workers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on public school students and arts workers. Beginning last year, Dance/NYC conducted the *Coronavirus Dance Impact Study*, a comprehensive mixed-methods study, and produced an informational brief on the impact of COVID-19 on the dance sector (<https://bit.ly/COVIDImpactBrief>). Findings indicated that dance organizations, groups, and projects—many of which engage in educational partnerships and extracurricular programs for students—saw their budgets shrink by nearly one-third (31% on average) due to earned and contributed revenue losses. As a result, 18% of dance organizations, groups, and projects believe that permanent closure is likely or extremely likely; 84% of those



facing permanent closure have budgets under \$100K. Small budget organizations are feeling the most acute impact of the pandemic, and challenges to organizational stability put the dance sector at risk of losing capacity to contribute to educational partnerships. The quality of dance education suffers with the reduction or loss of programming from these organizations. In school, after school, extracurricular, and field trip activities expose students to cultural experiences that can spark a lifelong interest and investment in dance and theatrical arts as a career, both on and off the stage, and cultivate future arts patrons and audiences. By encouraging participation and enjoyment of arts and cultural programming, dance education contributes to student well being in the short term and advances essential contributions to the creative economy in the long term.

Pandemic-related interruptions in programming, economic hardship, and permanent closures in the arts and culture sector have a direct impact on student access to and participation in arts programming, both in school and after school. For arts and cultural venues and institutions that provide services to arts workers and school-age students, the repercussions of organizational interruptions, displacement, and closures are compounded; losing access to these spaces puts the well being of arts workers, arts students, and the art itself at risk. Dance/NYC's *Coronavirus Dance Impact Informational Brief* (<https://bit.ly/COVIDImpactBrief>) shows that these impacts are felt most acutely by disabled, BIPOC, and immigrant arts workers who come from communities with less access to generational wealth, which in turn stands to exacerbate historical inequities in the field. Fewer arts workers and arts organizations in the City directly results in losses to cultural diversity and essential educational opportunities. Arts education programming provides a pipeline for students into creative careers and audience engagement, which relies on the sustained presence of arts and cultural organizations in an economic ecosystem that encompasses many other industries, including tourism, hospitality, and community services.

Additionally, arts education is an equity issue tied to racial, social, and economic justice. Gaps in student achievement along racial and socioeconomic lines are longstanding and persistent, as indicated by the New York City Independent Budget Office Schools Brief report on *Tracing Changes in Achievement Gaps by Race & Gender in New York City Public Schools*



(<https://bit.ly/AchievementGapReport>). The National Endowment for the Arts *A Decade of Arts Engagement* report (<https://bit.ly/NEAArtsEngagementReport>) finds that early participation in the arts encourages children to pursue higher achievement and learning opportunities. The Center for Arts Education report *Staying in School: Arts Education and New York City High School Graduation Rates* (<https://bit.ly/ArtsEdAndGraduationReport>) shows that arts education drives up school attendance and graduation rates and indicates that limited access to arts education correlates to BIPOC and low-income areas—evidence of sustained disparities in an inequitable system. Equity in education as a whole cannot become a reality if quality arts learning opportunities are only available to some students. Findings from UCLA’s *COVID-19 and the Digital Divide in Virtual Learning* report show that students of color and students from low-income backgrounds experienced acute impacts throughout the pandemic with regard to access to technology and instructional support for virtual learning to meet their individual needs (<https://bit.ly/COVIDDigitalDivideReport>). These disparities remain even as students return to the classroom. Arts education is a crucial component in the effort to resolve long standing inequities exacerbated by the pandemic.

These pressing issues must remain at the forefront of the Office of Arts & Special Projects Strategic Arts Plan, with prioritized funding to support and execute the measures required to foster equity and justice in the arts classroom. Arts education opens diverse pathways to learning and expressions of knowledge for students with disabilities and English language learners, which provides students an outlet to recognize and express their social and cultural identities. Teachers must also be supported with investments in training and certification for arts educators, with a particular focus on engaging BIPOC teachers through such programs as the OASP’s pilot program for supplementary certification for existing elementary Common Branch cluster teachers to earn their arts content certification. By providing universal access to arts education and championing equity in its planning and execution, the City sends the message that the arts are a viable pathway to success for all students, which supports the cultural diversity of the arts workforce and the economic health of the City’s creative industry. The benefits of arts education are evident in the experiences of today’s arts leaders, including Eduardo Vilaro, Artistic Director



of Ballet Hispánico and Dance/NYC board member, who says of his experience growing up in the Bronx: “Arts education is synonymous with community activism. Without arts educators, I would have been another statistic as a young Latinx child growing up in a tough neighborhood. The arts, in particular dance, saved me. The arts fill a void in communities forgotten, artists go into spaces others fear, and in that bravery, offer safety, possibility and transformation.”

The arts must remain central to a well-rounded education and be fully funded to support the well being of school communities. According to the 2019-20 *Arts in Schools Report* raw data, 67% of principals noted prior to the pandemic that funding for the arts is generally insufficient, and 56% of schools that cut arts partnership programs did so in response to school budget reductions. Both in school and after school arts programming directly support students’ academic achievement while also allowing students and their families to build and sustain meaningful cultural connections and activism efforts within their communities. Fostering equity in the arts begins in the classroom and necessarily extends to community-based arts organizations that partner with schools and offer independent programming for students and their families. These organizations provide spaces for safety, bravery, and transformative possibility for students in historically marginalized underserved communities, in addition employing the arts workforce as teaching artists and administrators. Thus, achieving equity in the field means providing support for schools and nonprofit arts and cultural organizations that primarily serve BIPOC, immigrant, disabled, and low-income communities throughout the City. Relief funding from the American Rescue Plan Act went a long way toward providing increased access to arts education through programs like Summer Rising. This level of funding must continue beyond relief measures and increase over time to truly support the essential nature of arts education. Sustainable, long term funding for arts education partnerships and after school programs through the Department of Cultural Affairs and Department of Youth and Community Development stands to support teaching artists and arts workers in the City’s arts and cultural sector.

Making the arts as a core subject in City schools, adequately funding arts programs and partnerships, and ensuring equity in the distribution of funding and programming all support the



essential nature of the arts in a well-rounded education, provide much-needed relief during the pandemic, and ensure the long-term capacity of schools and arts organizations to serve public school students and their communities. Funding should prioritize schools in neighborhoods hit hardest by the pandemic that continue to struggle to meet state standards for arts education.

Dance/NYC joins the City's arts and culture sector in asking for the City to ensure the value and benefits of arts education for generations to come. Arts and culture can lead the City's recovery and provide vital support to students, and these investments can help ensure their resilience, growth, and long-term survival.

For Dance/NYC and its constituents, the most urgent priorities are:

- 1. The instatement of the arts as a core subject in New York City schools;**
- 2. To prioritize funding for the Office of Arts & Special Projects Strategic Arts Plan to secure equitable access to high-quality universal arts education; and**
- 3. To adequately and sustainably fund arts education services, which directly supports partnerships and after school programs through the Department of Cultural Affairs and Department of Youth & Community Development.**

The above measures stand to support arts and culture as an essential component of a well-rounded education. Dance/NYC expresses gratitude to the City Councilmembers, City Officials, Mayor's Office and other dedicated workers who have contributed to the recovery of the City's arts and culture sector and the reopening of schools. Dance/NYC thanks the Chancellor and Department of Education for their historic \$70M investment in federal stimulus funding toward arts learning. With gratitude, Dance/NYC believes that comprehensive improvements and continued investments are to be made in order for every student in the City to reap the multiple benefits of a well-rounded education that includes robust arts instruction. Dance/NYC thanks you for your consideration and commends your leadership and ongoing efforts to support students, educators, and arts workers.

##



Digital Girl, Inc.

A STEM PROGRAM. ENRICHING GIRLS FROM THE ROOT.

12/06/2021

To whom it may concern:

My name is Michelle Gall, Founder and Executive Director of Digital Girl, Inc. (DGI). Many thanks to the Education Committee for allowing us this opportunity to share our story on how the Pandemic has impacted Digital Girl, Inc.

Digital Girl, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non profit organization, dedicated to empowering inner-city youth, particularly young girls, to pursue careers and studies in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Last month, DGI celebrated its seventh anniversary.

In January 2020, DGI had in place After-School or Summer School Enrichment Programs with 15 schools or community based organizations.

As quickly as the Pandemic put the world on pause, Digital Girl, Inc. shifted programming online and created "[The DGI Virtual Hangout](#)." It was important to us that we continued to provide programming and create some sense of normalcy for our students; to offer employment to our staff of 13, internships for the 8 interns we had working with us and to continue to be a resource for over extended parents-many of who were working for home and managing students at home. We were successful in offering consistent classes in Game Design, Digital Marketing and Website Design, Introduction to Computer Science, App Design, Digital Responsibility and Census Awareness and support virtually, 5 days a week. Additionally, we provided Chromebooks for children as some had received iPads from the Department of Education to complete online study yet the software necessary for some classes was not compatible with iPads or Tablets.

Over the last 20 months, DGI has pushed through COVID-19 sickness, pregnancy during a pandemic, participant disconnection due to Zoom fatigue and mental and emotional overwhelm, staffing challenges stemming from reasons including the Mass Exodus and resistance from COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates, and of course loss of funding due to the shutdown. In spite of these challenges, somehow, we managed to provide instruction to over 1500 participants, slightly down from our previous average. We have since resumed in person programming however still provide virtual programming for the unvaccinated.

Without the funding received from the City Council, specifically from Committee on Education Members Barron, Amprey-Samuel, Louis, Cornegy Jr. and the Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative, our plight would be exceptionally harder. Your support allows us to continue to be the resource NYC communities need and the reason DGI was created in the first place. Parents and students have told us that our programming and technical support helped to get them through the pandemic. We helped to provide an educational distraction from the overwhelmingly scary world our young people had to endure through and implore you to continue support or initiatives.

Sincerely,

Michelle Gall
Founder & Executive Director



12.6.21 Oversight hearing on the "Impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic on Arts Instruction, Extracurriculars, and School-Related Social Activities."

ETA Testimony given by Toby Boshak (testimony@council.nyc.gov)

Hello, I am Toby Boshak, Executive Director of Exploring the Arts and NYC public school parent-three times over. I am happy to be here today to speak with you.

First, I'd like to express our appreciation for the City's support of arts education. We are proud allies in the endeavor to ensure that all students have equitable access to high-quality, sequential arts education and arts opportunities, and are delighted to work with OASP, the Roundtable, and our art and cultural partners.

There is a wealth of documentation about the negative effects of the pandemic on students, teachers, and families including "learning loss" and socio-emotional and mental health decay. Counteractively, there is substantial data proving that kids engaged in vibrant arts programs have markedly better academic and social-emotional outcomes.

Thanks to ARPA funding, ETA is receiving additional support for our in-school programming - through DCLA. This year, we welcome six NEW schools to our roster of Partner schools helping them to create plans for developing, expanding and refining their arts programming: College Point Collaborative in Queens North, High School for Contemporary Arts in the Bronx, and in Brooklyn - John Jay School for Law, McKinney Secondary School for the Arts, Williamsburg High School of Art and Technology and The Young Women's Leadership School of Brooklyn. The additional funds are also helping us build the capacity of all our 37 Partner schools in all 5 boroughs - through classroom teacher professional development opportunities and peer learning community gatherings to share resources and practices.

But we are facing a number of challenges:

- **Field trip guidance ambiguity** has thrown a wrench in schools' Fall plans to take students to live performances and museums as part of their learning. The perception that guidance will continue to shift without clear understanding of when or why means that it's also difficult to plan these kinds of culminating experiences for Spring semester.
- With **little clarity around the high school admissions process** or timeline, our critical work to support middle-to-high school pipelines -- for example, for young musicians in the Bronx, a focal area for our work in partnership with the Kennedy Center Turnaround

Arts Program -- is difficult to collaboratively plan with our middle and high school leaders and families.

- **Issues with contracting and fingerprinting** further complicate in-school arts residencies that we proudly fund as a vital component of our work to support partner schools' capacity building in the arts. For example, a hip hop dance residency at a middle school in Queens seems to be on indefinite hold while a teaching artist waits to be approved to work on site.

We appreciate your attention to these issues as we all work together to find creative solutions to help our community heal, rebuild, and THRIVE. Thank you.



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Testimony of Khin Mai Aung
New York Executive Director, Generation Citizen
December 6, 2021
New York City Council

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Generation Citizen (“GC”) at this morning’s Hearing on the Impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic on Arts Instruction, Extracurriculars, and School-Related Social Activities. I’m Khin Mai Aung, the Executive Director at Generation Citizen New York (“GCNY”), and I’m also a NYC public school parent of three. GC is thankful for the Council’s \$500,000 investment this year in our programming and youth civics education through the *Civics Education in City Schools Initiative*. Thanks to this support, GC has been able to educate over 15,000 middle and high public school students over the last five years.

When faced with pandemic-related disruptions in spring 2020, GC nimbly shifted to remotely supporting teachers in implementing our programming through our Democracy Doesn't Pause initiative. We used Google Classroom to allow teachers to access curricular resources, coordinated video calls for students to interact with virtual guest speakers, and provided frequent, structured coaching to help teachers compile class-specific research and civics resources.

GC also created online resources for educators and caregivers to engage young people and sustain high quality programming through the entirely online [Kick Start Action Civics](#) program. These resources are also available in Spanish [here](#).

In the disrupted 2020-21 school year, GC’s programming provided students a critical chance to connect and collaborate although they were either entirely unable to meet in person, or could only meet intermittently. Through our programming, classes advocated on a range of local issues. These included curricular concerns (e.g., the need for a more engaging science curricula), school conditions (like the lack of outdoor space and gym use, or school cell phone policies), and broader community issues (like police relations, homophobia and bullying, and the need for expanded extracurriculars). Some focused on COVID specific themes like racism amplified by pandemic disruptions, as well as mental health issues, anxiety, depression, and drug abuse in our communities.

GC is an eleven year-old national, nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to demystifying democracy for youth by bringing civics education into the classroom through a new, engaging pedagogy: Action Civics. Action Civics is a “student-centered, project-based approach to civics education that develops the individual skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for 21st century democratic practice” ([National Action Civics Collaborative](#)). It differs from normative, knowledge-based civic education in the same way that taking any “hands-on,” project-based, or experiential course differs from reading a textbook. Students learn about democratic structures and processes by directly engaging with them, as well as with each other, to address one or more issues they care about, which are impacting their community.

All students - especially youth of color, socio-economically disadvantaged youth, immigrant and refugee youth for whom our public education system may be their first exposure to our democratic process, and other youth from underprivileged or otherwise underrepresented backgrounds - need meaningful and empowering engagement within our political institutions as an integral part of their core social studies education.

GC is incredibly thankful for the City Council’s renewed funding despite myriad challenges and budgetary concerns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. GC hopes to continue partnering with the Council and the Department of Youth and Community Development to bring civics education to schools as we continue safe operations of our schools moving forward.

Thank you Chairman Treyger and the Committees members for considering this testimony. I can be reached at kaung@generationcitizen.org with any questions or comments, and I have attached a one-pager with more information about our programming.



GENERATION CITIZEN

DON'T TALK ABOUT CHANGE. LEAD IT.

Mission & Vision

Generation Citizen (GC) is working to transform civics education so that young people are equipped and inspired to exercise their civic power.

We envision a **just, inclusive democracy** that is responsive to all young people.



Our Work

For over a decade, GC has been transforming how civics education is taught by bringing the subject to life for students through real-world engagement with democracy. With **Action Civics** students address local community issues and develop communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills to learn and practice the behaviors of active citizenship within an academic setting.

We also provide thought leadership, conduct research, and build coalitions to advocate for state- and district-level policies that ensure schools prioritize Action Civics. By investing in teachers and their capacity to activate youth voices in the classroom and beyond, GCNY is enabling a movement of young people prepared to lead in our democracy.

Who We Serve

In 2021, GC New York supported approximately **2,700 students** in **108 classrooms** across **40 schools**. To ensure that our democracy represents the voices of all people, we prioritize working with students from communities that have been historically excluded from the political process.

- Approximately **79%** of Generation Citizen students identify as persons of color
- **72%** of GC students are low-income, defined as “economically disadvantaged” by the New York City Department of Education and the New York State Education Department
- **55%** of Generation Citizen students speak a language other than English at home



Civic Education in New York City Initiative

The Civic Education in New York City initiative supports civic education programs that provide educators with content and expertise to lead semester-long Action Civics programs in DOE middle and high schools.

The New York City Council first granted funding to GC in 2017, and designated \$500,000 for fiscal year 2022 in support of our Action Civics programming.



GENERATION CITIZEN

DON'T TALK ABOUT CHANGE. LEAD IT.

Impact

Academics and experts in the field agree upon three indicators which best predict a student's likelihood of future civic engagement: Civic Knowledge, Civic Skills, and Civic Motivation.

CIVIC KNOWLEDGE

81%

of students could identify the best action to make to address an issue after completing their GC course

CIVIC SKILLS

71%

of students improved use of acquired skills to effectively participate in the political process. This includes oral and written persuasive communication, group-work, and critical thinking.

CIVIC MOTIVATION

70%

of students, after GC, believe they have the power to make a difference in their community

CLASSROOM FOCUS ISSUE EXAMPLES



JUSTICE & EQUALITY: Bullying, Discrimination, Immigration, Affordable Housing & More



HEALTH: Sex Education, PTSD among Veterans, Suicide Prevention & More



ENVIRONMENT: Reducing Plastic Use, Water Conservation, Littering & More



ECONOMY & JOBS: Youth Unemployment, Job Training, Employment Opportunities & More



PUBLIC SAFETY: Police and Community Relations, Gun Violence, Safe Streets & More



EDUCATION & STUDENT VOICE: Life Skills, Equitable School Funding, College Access & More

Classroom Highlight

Focus Issue: Educational Funding in Minority Schools

School: Urban Assembly Institute of Math and Science for Young Women

Students found that low funding is one of the root causes of inequality in NYC public schools. The quality of education students receive in low income and higher earning communities varies greatly largely due to funding and resource disparities. To find out more about this topic students invited Nequan McLean, President - District 16 Community Education Council, NYC to gather information and tactics for action steps. After this interview, students determined their goal would be for "Community education councils to require a student to advocate for the district. Furthermore, the mayor controls how schools are funded. Ultimately, don't be afraid to speak up to your principals and legislators, your voices matter." Students were also able to gather information from Larry Woodbridge, Senior Executive Director of NYC Department of Education. Students also created surveys to get the thoughts of their community stakeholders.

Lynda Kennedy, MS Ed, PhD Vice President, Education & Evaluation

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of the Intrepid Museum.

The Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum is a non-profit, educational institution located on Manhattan's West Side, along pier 86 at 46th St. Its mission is to promote the awareness and understanding of history, science and service through its collections, exhibitions and programming in order to honor our heroes, educate the public and inspire our youth.

Education programming at Intrepid is grounded in our collections but also expands beyond them. While we are not usually thought of as an institution that delivers arts instruction, we regularly integrate the arts. We see history, science and art as interconnected for inspiring curiosity, wonder and creative solutions to 21st century challenges. We engage our historic collections to contextualize and understand the present and as tools to imagine the future. Programs are inclusive and accessible as possible, with an eye to universal design, and are created to address the needs of different types of learners and student strengths.

Long serving as a site of out of school time programming for students as well as in-school support for teachers and classes, we see ourselves as part of the educational ecosystem in New York City. The Museum has had long-standing partnerships with schools and offices of the New York City Department of Education (DOE) as well as relationships with the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and other youth serving City agencies for both in-school and extracurricular programming.

The Covid pandemic had a significant impact on how we worked with schools and served students in the out of school time space. Spring of 2020 was just about survival mode in terms of students and classrooms, let alone their work with the Museum. However, the Museum quickly evolved and reached out to support teachers and students. The Museum physically shut down in

mid-March and by April, we had launched virtual drop-in school-focused classes daily. Teachers could simply have their students show up for these programs without the hurdle of pre-booking. Private virtual programs were still offered at no cost to New York City schools, but many teachers found it difficult to plan for attendance week to week. Drop-in programs were more successful at meeting their needs at that time.

For the school year 2020-21 we continued to offer drop-in programs three times a week as not all schools were yet able to find a rhythm to book programs in advance - though after a summer of hard work, teachers and school administrations as a whole were much better equipped to organize their curriculum through the blended and remote learning options. With the benefit of time to plan, we offered different forms of virtual experiences for schools, including programs which supported students in self-contained classrooms and for those who were multilingual learners. In the end over 13,000 students and teachers participated in educator-led K-12 programs that year and 87% of teachers surveyed reported that they planned to use the additional materials provided to them such as videos or extension activities. In this current school year, we continue to offer virtual programs, and schools are taking even more advantage of them.

The Museum supported teachers and students in and out of school in a variety of other ways. We offered drop-in virtual family programs twice weekly (daily during school breaks), ultimately serving over 11,000 kids and parents who were hungry for things to do. We held a remotely delivered two-week National Endowment of the Humanities summer institute for teachers. NYC participant teachers received CTLE credit. Other professional learning opportunities were offered as well. As soon as we reopened physically, we hosted DOE Discovery Days where the Department of Education's Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Learning registered families for visits to the Museum for free programs, safely in

small groups over three days at spring recess and three days in summer. At the request of the same office, we developed virtual field trips for summer school and a program examining the role of LGBTQ service members, while discussing the challenges of returning missing voices to the history curriculum.

After finishing our Cultural Afterschool Adventures (CASA) partnership programs remotely in spring of 2020, we offered a new round of virtual CASA programs for 10 schools over the course of the 2020-2021 school year. In the same year we also offered schools on Staten Island virtual Immigrant Initiative programs covering the contributions of immigrants to the history and science of the Navy, aviation and space. For two summers (2020 and 2021), we hosted a free, virtual, six-week program for 51 girls exploring STEM content and careers and several week-long Access Maker camps for children with developmental disabilities including autism. Finally, we continued to offer our National Endowment for the Humanities “Crossing the Line” program, completely redesigning the 10-session research, writing and performance residency to be delivered remotely. It was in the extracurricular space that we saw the most impact of Zoom fatigue and general disconnection of students, particularly in areas of the city where students and their families were facing more intense Covid-related challenges. Even the chance to use theater, music or poetry to explore a subject with peers was just hard after hours already on a screen, and while 51 girls passionate about STEM completed the summer program, in summer of 2021 they were ready for, and we gave them, some days in person in small groups. Everyone was just tired of the screen.

With the return to in-person programming, in summer of 2021 we, along with many other cultural and informal education providers offered training for Summer Rising staff on engaging

students with content in our specialty areas, and we supported summer DYCD sites by providing materials kits and virtual events around engineering and design.

As we finish out the first semester of the 2021-2022 school year, there are continuing challenges facing schools and students who want to engage the wider resources of cultural organizations in New York City to support in and out of school time learning. Schools can't get buses for a variety of reasons, limiting the ability to reach sites in person. Outbreaks, variants and vaccination issues further disrupt the school rhythm that allows for partnerships or even planning a simple field trip.

The advantage for students who live in a city such as New York is the rich array of arts, science and history organizations that offer multimodal approaches for content exploration, in and out of school time opportunities, and events which can engage students and inspire teachers. The programs and educational resources of organizations like the Intrepid Museum are often free and we stand ready to support teachers and students in their learning goals. The challenge has always been who knows how to make use of these resources. Not only is the much appreciated funding needed to support these programs and support schools in organizing travel, class coverage, etc., but awareness of their importance needs to be raised. A clear and explicit statement needs to be made about how important it is to fold these cultural resources into the school and afterschool learning experiences in meaningful ways. Any recovery initiative which focuses on learning loss but which does not include the wider educational ecosystem available in New York City will not be as successful as it could be, as students who do not thrive in a traditional classroom setting will often come to life when arts, culture, historic spaces, artifacts, or hands-on science is integrated. Any plans for recovery should explicitly include museums and other cultural organizations to enliven and enrich the learning experience and reengage teachers

and students with the joy of learning, no matter which zip code they live in. Thank you for your time.

Hello,

I am writing to you today to advocate for Arts in Education in the New York Department of Education from the point of view of a cultural institutional partner. Throughout the pandemic, I observed incredible resiliency from dance teachers in the New York City Public School System. From keeping kids moving while engaged, but not seated, in front of their screens, to using their own kitchen islands as barres to keep their students limber, to creating online dance concerts, NYCDOE dance teachers' overarching theme was that movement and connection must prevail through and in response to hardship to promote physical and mental health and wellness. But what dance teachers know is that dance has always been a respite for the hyperactive child, a place to stretch and breathe through a hard day, or a specific place to be creative with classmates. Now that teachers have returned to the classroom it is important to fund space and equipment for movement, and to make dance education an integral part of the school day. Many dance teachers are teaching in cafeterias, gyms, and on auditorium stages vs. a dance classroom with mirrors, barres, and a sprung floor to prevent injury. Funding for Arts in Education may allow for dance to be a priority in a local public school.

Children learn more effectively when they have taken a break from their desks. Dancing teaches focus, balance, and to try new things. These are all skills they need in the traditional classroom setting. Dance teachers need your financial support for improving space, acquiring necessary equipment, and for self-care.

Thank you,

Kathleen Leary

Dance Education Coordinator, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts



December 6, 2021

Testimony offered to the New York City Council's Committee on Education hearing on the "Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Arts Instruction, Extracurriculars, and School-Related Social Activities."

My name is Kati Koerner and I am the Hiltz Director of Education at Lincoln Center Theater, a proud board member of the New York City Arts in Education Roundtable, and the parent of a current 8th grader who attends public school in Manhattan.

Thank you to Chair Mark Treyger and the entire City Council Education Committee for this opportunity to testify and for your strong support of arts education in our schools. I'd also like to thank Chancellor Meisha Porter and the Department of Education (DOE) for their foresight in earmarking \$70 million of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars specifically for arts education. These critical resources are making it possible for organizations like Lincoln Center Theater to use the arts to address the ongoing academic and social-emotional impact of the pandemic with the 4,800 young people in 35 New York City public middle and high schools who we will serve this year.

Students in New York City's schools are still processing so much loss while having to adjust to an ever-shifting series of 'new normals.' Last spring, Emma Lazarus High School asked Lincoln Center Theater to conduct a semester-long theater course to help students fulfill their arts requirements. Souleymane, an Emma Lazarus student from Guinea-Bissau who has been in the United States for just two and a half years and whom we worked with on that project, told us that, "Theater can help you deal with your anxiety, something that I'm still dealing with." The arts are a means for students like Souleymane to process difficult emotions, engage with their school communities, develop a sense of craft, and deepen their academic engagement.

Like schools, theaters are doing everything to keep people safe. However, right now, the lack of a vaccination requirement in schools effectively bars students from accessing cultural institutions such as Lincoln Center Theater that require proof of vaccination for entry. The current DOE field trip guidance is unclear and inequitable, as not all students are able to access extracurricular field trips due



to work or family commitments, or because it's dangerous for them to travel home after dark. A vaccination requirement for students would ensure that young people can once again receive equitable access to live theater and integrate that experience in their academic learning.

In spite of all the ongoing pandemic-imposed challenges to arts instruction, Lincoln Center Theater remains committed to serving students and teachers in New York City's public schools, especially those students, such as Multilingual Learners, who are typically underserved in the arts. I urge the City Council to ensure that schools continue to receive the necessary arts education funding to ensure that students like Souleymane can continue to flourish, both academically and emotionally.

Thank you.



LEAP (Learning through an Expanded Arts Program)

Written testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Education

Hearing date: Monday, Dec 6, 2021

Submission date: Thursday, Dec 9, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and submit these comments on behalf of LEAP, the youth and families we serve, and the community of providers of arts education and creative youth development programs.

About LEAP

Founded in 1977, LEAP's mission is to bring educational arts programs to promote access and equity for NYC students underserved in the arts. We inspire diverse school communities to love learning and help them build their creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills. LEAP uses experiences in the visual arts, theater, dance, music, and new media arts to empower students to become change agents through programs that incorporate social justice themes, engage youth in advocacy and activism, and support their development as creative leaders and young artists.

LEAP operates in-school and afterschool programs in over 100 schools throughout NYC, reaching more than 15,000 K-12th grade students each year. LEAP's partner schools are beacons of cultural richness, situated in communities adversely impacted by systemic inequities that have resulted in deficits in economic, arts, and educational opportunities. The historic exclusion of these communities has caused severe disparities that lead to negative student outcomes. 83% of the students LEAP serves live at or below the poverty line, 18% are Multi-Language Learners and at least 21% have special needs. We operate most of our programs in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens where the LEAP student cohort is 50% Hispanic, 29% African American, 9% Asian, 10% Caucasian, and 2% another ethnicity. LEAP's staff is made up of 37 full-time staff members and over 200 part-time teaching artists and instructors; a significant majority of LEAP staff are from communities similar to those we serve.

Overall Benefit/Outcomes

The arts provide a powerful vehicle to teach social and emotional learning (SEL) skills, which lay the foundation for success in school, careers, and life. Research shows that the traditional school model and core curriculum do not always engage youth and do not engage all learners. In fact, students in schools that offer arts-integrated educational experiences are more likely to show better academic outcomes and demonstrate greater motivation and engagement in learning. Despite this, many New York City schools provide inequitable arts access for youth. To address this, LEAP uses a Creative Youth Development framework to guide all programs, offers a quality artistic experience in multiple art forms, and incorporates social justice themes



throughout programs. This combination of research-based practices, artistic excellence, and cultural relevance makes LEAP programs distinct among peers. Our programs are developed based on research from our evaluation partner, Hello Insight, and demonstrate that “The LEAP Way”, when offered through students’ preferred ways of learning, leads to social and emotional skill development in youth. We evaluate the effectiveness of our programs through student check-ins and also assess the confidence levels of our staff to facilitate meaningful youth experiences.

“The LEAP Way” fosters SEL skills development through the following experiences:

- Challenge Growth: We challenge young people to take risks.
- Engage Authentically: We get to know each young person by centering their cultural and lived experiences, their interests, and passions.
- Expand Interests: We support young people as they try new things, broaden their horizons, learn about other people, cultures, and perspectives, and explore their own identities.
- Manage Goals: We assist young people in setting goals, breaking them down into manageable steps, and reflecting on challenges and successes.
- Promote Peer Bonds: We create a safe space for young people to work in teams and groups, exploring similarities and differences, and developing deep bonds and relationships.
- Share Power: We ensure that young people feel that their voices and opinions matter.

In 2020, our Hello Insight program evaluation data showed that:

- More than 80% of youth in our Bronx and Brooklyn middle school afterschool programs would recommend LEAP to a friend (Program Satisfaction). We know that when youth are satisfied with a program, they are more engaged in learning and better prepared to develop SEL skills.
- 81% of elementary students, 92% of Bronx middle school students, and 81% of Brooklyn middle school students felt safe and supported by one another in LEAP’s afterschool programs (Promote Peer Bonds).
- 88% of young people in our Brooklyn middle school afterschool programs experienced staff that valued young people’s thoughts, opinions, and ideas (Engage Authentically).
- 87% of youth in our Brooklyn middle school afterschool programs had the opportunity to engage in activities they like to do (Expand Interests).

All LEAP programs use a culturally responsive pedagogy, incorporate project-based learning, and provide hands-on arts activities. Our programming is supported by an extensive professional development model led by our most experienced Teaching Artists and staff, which offers hundreds of hours of training throughout the year. LEAP’s full-time and part-time staff are demographically reflective of the youth and communities we serve and many LEAP staff are artists in their local community.



LEAP provides a nurturing place for youth in NYC to create and a safe place for youth to spend out of school hours, serving as a high quality childcare solution for working families. LEAP works closely with school partners to learn the needs of the community and plans programming to meet those needs. All programs have planning meetings where the LEAP Teaching Artist(s) and Program Manager(s) meet with school staff members to collaboratively determine the activities, benchmarks, and goals of the program. Afterschool programs engage students to share their voice regarding programs through trial activities, surveys, and group discussions. Program offerings are designed based on this feedback, assessed on a regular basis, and changed if they are not meeting the youths' needs. All programs connect school communities with families and individuals in the larger neighborhood through culminating events and family engagement workshops.

COVID Response

LEAP's nimble response to school closures in March 2020 laid the groundwork for our approach this current school year. Less than a month after schools closed, LEAP launched Virtual Art Rooms, which continued our educational programs online. LEAP's Virtual Art Rooms used Google Classroom as the hub for remote learning and employed both synchronous and asynchronous learning. Project-based unit plans were developed for each program and included original recorded videos, extended arts instruction and assignments, project submissions that involved peer-to-peer discussion and teacher feedback, and virtual culminating events to connect peers with each other. These programs served 613 students at 24 schools. In June 2020, we launched Summer Fun, a month-long online program that served 75 students at ten schools. This program helped students build resilience through social and emotional learning while isolated and prepared them to transition to blended in-person and online learning in the fall.

In addition to our Virtual Art Rooms, we launched a collection of free mini-lessons on our website to offer the LEAP experience to students who were unable to participate in our paid remote programs. This collection of lessons featured excerpts from our full-length Virtual Art Rooms lessons. These creative experiences provide equitable access for youth, families, and teachers in NYC and beyond and teach various subjects, including visual arts, drama, dance, singing, literacy, STEAM, mindfulness, and more. LEAP continues to provide remote programming to meet the needs of our partner schools in the current school year (2021-22).

Current Programming

Currently, the New York City Department of Education is facing an inadequate number of teachers and noting significant learning loss levels amongst all students, especially those in under-resourced communities. LEAP has worked tirelessly to once again bring in-person arts-based learning opportunities to school partners across the city to help address these issues. During the summer, LEAP was granted a generous opportunity through the DOE's Office of Arts and Special Projects ("Summer Rising") to bring large-scale mural and robust theater-based programs to 9 schools in Brooklyn and the Bronx. These programs were such a success that OASP offered more of these opportunities in the fall, funding 5 schools that LEAP



partnered with in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens, and Manhattan. With many beginning as early as the start of the school year in September 2021, LEAP currently has over 100 in- and afterschool residencies operating across the city. LEAP also maintains extensive afterschool contracts through DYCD and private means to fund 27 afterschool sites in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Manhattan. With the DOE allocation of \$350 million in federal funding to combat educational damage brought on by the pandemic, and with 20% of that earmarked for arts-related programming, LEAP anticipates programs to more than double by the end of the school year.

Problems/Proposed Solutions

Despite meeting the majority of arts program requests being presented to LEAP, we are facing continued issues with arts personnel (Teaching Artist and Activity Specialist) staffing, leaving LEAP in the necessary position of declining partnerships, and effectively leaving schools without arts programming. In pre-COVID years, LEAP employed over 400+ arts-based personnel. Today, as the creative sector in New York faces a staffing shortage similar to many other sectors across the country, LEAP has retained a part-time arts education staff of just over 200 who are eligible to work under DOE vaccine requirements. Our staffing challenges are made significantly worse by the delays we experience with the DOE fingerprinting and PETS processing, which is taking weeks in some cases.

Arts providers also experience significant challenges working under the current contracting process. The work order and purchase order structure often restricts our ability to develop a school partnership that meets the needs of the school community. In addition, it has often been challenging to invoice and be paid for services, causing significant cash flow challenges

LEAP proposes the following items for consideration:

- This summer and fall, we were thrilled with the program opportunities offered by the OASP partner grants and children responded with so much enthusiasm and some amazing artwork. We hope that level of funding will continue in the coming school year and we ask the committee to support increases in DOE funding for arts programs with an emphasis on grants that allow the school and partners to plan the most relevant and responsive experience for the students.
- The DOE could encourage collaboration among partners that could focus on personnel-related challenges. The collaboration might result in a shared staffing model between arts-based CBOs or Teaching Artists pathways to DOE arts personnel certification. We also ask the DOE to resource the department responsible for fingerprinting and PETS clearance to allow employees to move through the systems more efficiently.
- A partnership between CBOs and the DOE to review how MTACs operate, how purchase orders are created and distributed, and how invoices and payments are processed. Through collaboration, more transparency could be established between CBOs and the DOE, resulting in a more trusting and informed partner relationship.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts about the importance of continued funding for quality arts education in New York City Public Schools and for New York City Arts Education Institutions, and specifically for the ARPA funding.

My name is Naomi Avadanei, and I am the theatre educator at the Ella Baker School, which was founded on the beliefs of Ella Josephine Baker and is one of the few truly diverse schools in District 2. She was an inspiring civil rights leader who believed that “strong people don’t need strong leaders” and that if given the right tools, young people can change the world. Ms. Baker said, “give light and people will find the way.” At the Ella Baker school, we aim to give all students light regardless of socioeconomic differences.

I strongly believe that students should engage in cultural partnerships and participate in arts experiences. After the past two years our students have had they need the opportunity to connect with one another, to build relationships (beyond the digital space) and to process through current events creatively. The ARPA funding could not be more urgent. Over the past 9 years teaching with the New York City Department of Education I have found that some of the most impactful and powerful moments in my career have been when students are directly involved in making, responding to and attending artistic experiences.

One of my FAVORITE teaching moments happened when we told the 3rd-8th grade ensemble of Lion King Kids that after months of dedication to rehearsal, they were going to see Aladdin on Broadway for free! 9 year old Charlie Macias was so excited by the news that he began to cry. This is the same student that told me during auditions that musical theater was stupid. Before participating in Lion King, Charlie’s mom told me that getting him up and ready for school was a struggle now, Charlie is the first one at rehearsal showing off his vast knowledge of Hamilton lyrics. Arts make a difference. Access to cultural partnerships like DMIS with funding like the ARPA funding is a HUGE part of what makes it possible for me to create opportunities for students like Charlie.

Over the past 8 years my students have attended and participated in close to 100 live performances by going on field trips and bringing outside organizations into our schools. As many of our students come from low-income families, opportunities like these are not possible without outside funding. By living in the cultural capital of the world, students have had the opportunity to work with professional teaching artists, attend world-class art institutions, and see high-quality live performances. Artists and

educators from the likes of The New Victory Theatre, Lincoln Center, and Disney Theatricals have worked with my students to deepen their experiences of the productions they've seen. The Arpa funding is essential in order to continue partnerships like these and grow new partnerships.

While our school is located on the Upper East Side, most of our families are not located on the Upper East Side. Many students come from low income families and travel to get to Ella Baker every day. The pandemic caused us to lose a lot of our funding, funding that would typically go to bringing in outside arts organizations and taking students to see live theatre productions. This year, I haven't had the opportunity to expose my students to the type of arts education they **deserve**.

There are no field trips and no live performances.

I'm not collaborating with outside organizations to create a robust theatre curriculum that challenges my students and helps them grow as artists, collaborators, and citizens.

I am a strong THEATRE educator. I am passionate about quality arts education for ALL students. I'm not unique. There are hundreds of other arts educators like me, thousands of students that don't have access to arts experiences, and thousands of opportunities and partnerships that have not and might not survive this pandemic.

I leave you with these words from Madison Smith, one of my 8th grade students, who submitted this as part of her artist statement while we were working on the #BeAnArtsHero campaign as charged by the New Victory Theatre:

“The arts are important not only for me but for so many other people. The arts aren't just things people do for fun, the arts are a way out for some people,

something that makes them happy,

something that can help people with trauma cope,

even a saving grace for some.”

I don't want to think about how students like Madison or Charlie would cope with the current pandemic, the events that took place in the Capitol last Wednesday or the current state of the nation without the ability to express themselves and process these events through their artistry.

Thank you for your time.

The Office of Arts and Special Projects, whose support has been instrumental to the future and sustainability of Arts Education in New York City, has created countless opportunities for my students and me over the past 8 years, and continues to do so, despite the global pandemic.

[My artistry] has always been my way of expressing myself. When I feel I don't have the words to say how I feel I dance. When I'm too angry and fragile to speak without crying I dance. When I've been hurt and left vulnerable I dance. Dancing is my passion. It's my world.

You know, I was going to name a bunch of reasons about how performers need stages to perform on, and how artists need canvases to paint on, and how photographers need things to take pictures of. But performers don't need stages to perform. We see performers everywhere, on the sidewalks, on the train, even in the parks. Artists paint everywhere: walls, streets, books, etc. photographers take pictures of everything I don't even need to give a list. The point I'm trying to make is that art is everywhere, it doesn't need a designated time or space. Everywhere you look you find a piece of art no matter what shape or form. So if we get our stages or props taken that doesn't matter, we are the art. Any form of art is nothing without someone to bring it to life. So the phrase a world without art is impossible, because as long as we have people who love to do those arts there's no losing it. The arts will be here to stay, with or without our stages.

Last year, I applied for a grant through Disney Musicals in Schools, a three-year partnership through Disney Theatricals in which public schools receive the support and resources necessary to create a lasting culture of musical theatre in schools. Before this, Ella Baker had no theatre program. To date, more than 500 of my students have had the opportunity to participate in creating a piece of musical theatre from the ground up. Partnerships with cultural institutions like Disney Musicals in Schools, the New Victory Theatre and Lincoln Center Education have afforded my students valuable opportunities to experience live theatre and work with professional teaching artists.

BREATH

75 4th and 5th grade students were excitedly running through their final rehearsals of Aladdin kids when the COVID-19 pandemic closed all schools. I **knew** I needed to find a way to **go forward** after hearing the **determination** and **hope** in my students' voices as they asked, "what's going to happen with Aladdin?" Over the next two months, we transitioned to a virtual production.

Witnessing more than 700 people from across the world come together last Wednesday in the Zoom audience spoke volumes of the power of arts education to bring communities **together** and to **heal**.

In theatre there is an old adage (**AD IDGE**), "show, don't tell." I'll close with a few words from some of the parents and students at Ella Baker that will truly **show** you why arts education is essential to New York City's recovery.

Mary, the PTA parent of a 1st and 3rd grader shared:

“In the End of year Survey results, Over and over parents mentioned that theatre was a bright spot for their kids. Improv, Puppetry and Aladdin were seen as some of the best things for the kids **mentally!**”

Karina, 4th grade stage manager and older sister of a 2nd grader wrote:

“My sister goes to your 11:30 classes almost everyday of the week. After the class ends she’ll come to me and say, “Look at what I made!” She says this with pride and I can see that she **is** proud. That is a look that I didn’t see on my sister’s face before she started spending time with you.

There are so many more kids in Ella Baker who have a voice because of you.

You help Ella Baker students see all the things they can do.

Julian, a fifth grader, said:

“The arts have been very important to me because they help me to get emotion out after a stressful day at school. It helps you calm down and get excited about something in the future. If arts weren't a part of school, I would be disappointed and it would be harder to go to school.”

Cutting funding for Arts Education will **disproportionately** affect students of color like Julian and Karina, many of whom would **not** have access to the arts outside of their schools.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on arts education programming. Arts education is **essential** to the fabric of this city and **crucial** in

the effort to **restore** and **rebuild** our **great** city and the bright future our students have.

We need you, the Council members who understand that the **#ARTSareEssential**, to urge the Mayor to do everything in his power to foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation through arts education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the importance of continued funding for quality arts education in New York City Public Schools. My name is Naomi Avadanei, and I am a theatre Educator at the Ella Baker School where I teach 300 students in grades Pre-K to 8 on a weekly basis.

On March 13th of this year 75 4th and 5th grade students were excitedly running through their final dress rehearsals of our production of Aladdin kids when the COVID-19 pandemic closed all schools indefinitely. I didn't know how we would go forward, but I knew I needed to find a way after hearing the determination and hope in my students' voices as they asked, "what's going to happen with Aladdin?" Over the next two months, we worked to transition to a virtual production. On

Wednesday, June 17th our virtual production premiered. Witnessing the school community come together in the Zoom audience spoke volumes of the power of arts education to bring communities together and to heal. Even in the face of EXTREME adversity these young artists were able to **come** together and to **bring** together a community of over 500 people.

In theatre there is an old adage that says, “show, don’t tell” and so, I’ll close with a few words from some of the parents and students at Ella Baker who wrote to me after the Virtual Aladdin Watch Party that will truly **show** you why arts education is essential and why the arts are critical to the health and well being of New York City’s recovery from this incredibly traumatic time.

Mary, the PTA parent of a 1st and 3rd grader shared:

“You were mentioned so many times in the End of year Survey results. Over and over parents mentioned that you were a bright spot for their kids. Improv, Puppetry and Aladdin were seen as some of the best things for the kids mentally!”

Karina, our 4th grade student stage manager and older sister of a 2nd grader wrote to me:

My sister goes to your 11:30 classes almost everyday of the week. After the class ends she’ll come to me and say, “Look at what I made!” She says this with pride and I can see that she is proud. That is a look that I didn’t see on my sister’s face before she started spending time with you. I am not the only one who notices that.

There are so many more kids in Ella Baker who have a voice because of you. My dream isn’t to be in theater but I am still inspired by you because I want to have the same attitude for my dream.

Sometimes kids can’t reach their best. You push kids so they see what their full potential is. Many 4th and 5th graders started Aladdin thinking they could not sing, dance or act. Look at them now. You help Ella Baker students see all the things they can do. And when the show is done, everyone feels proud.

Julian, a fifth grader, said:

“The arts have been very important to me because they help me to get emotion out after a stressful day at school. It helps you calm down and get excited about something in the future. If arts weren’t a part of school, I would be disappointed and it would be harder to go to school.”

Cutting funding for Arts Education will disproportionately affect students like Julian and Karina who have experienced trauma and many of whom would not have access to quality arts programming outside of their public schools.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education and specifically on arts education programming. Arts education is an essential to the fabric of this city and crucial in the effort to restore and rebuild our great city and the bright future our students have. Let us not **take it out** on our students or their future.

We need you, the Council members who understand that the #ARTSareEssential, to urge the Mayor to do everything in his power to foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation through arts education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Bella, a fourth grader said:

I, and I am sure many others, will agree that arts at school are one of the motivated me to get up and get ready for school every morning. I think, "yay! Today is art!" Or, "Drama is so fun.

Clara, a parent of 2 4th grade students said:

"Arts give our kids a chance to build confidence, teamwork and skills that they really can't learn in any other class. They stretch themselves and their relationships with classmates in art, music, dance and drama. Especially now, it is essential that our kids have opportunities to develop trust, respect and empathy with classmates who may not otherwise be their friends. They don't learn this in math or social studies, but they do in drama."

Jennifer and Trevor, parents of a fifth grade student said:

"We can not express how important arts programming in public school has been to the positive social and emotional development of our child, Julian. The arts have improved his self confidence tremendously, have made him feel a part of a positive community within school and helped him to discover something that he truly loves. Since getting more involved in arts programming, Julian's overall attitude towards school has become more positive. We can't thank his arts teachers enough for the way they have helped Julian grow into an expressive, confident child. He is always looking forward to the next theater project."

Ben, a fifth grader said:

"I really love performing because it's fun, and it made me feel valuable."

Shanwel, a fourth grade student said:

"Arts is essential because when you have arts it builds character and personality. When you act out different characters in shows you have the ability to express different emotions."

Riley a 7th grader said

The inclusion of an arts education in school is way more important than you think. For everything you would want to have as a career, you need some kind of childhood experience to pursue it. And one of the best ways to get that type of education- is within your school. However, In most schools, their main focuses are: Reading, Writing, Math and Science. But what if your passion is being an artist or a theatre actor? And what if they don't teach you anything about that in school? Where would you get that childhood education from? Schools need to teach you more than just Reading, Writing, Math and Science!

All kids need an education, but not all kid's parents can afford one. This is why kids' education systems can't run by profit, as they put a kids education before the money- which IS totally true. Now, look at schools compared to art/theatre classes. A lot of art/theatre organizations DOES run on profit (With of course, SOME exceptions) meaning a lot of art/theatre classes end up being crazy expensive! What I am trying to say is, if you bring that arts education INTO a public school then parents would get to avoid that trouble- and yet, their kids will still get an arts education!

Now, what about kids that DO NOT want an art's education based career? Well, believe it or not, they STILL need an arts education. Think about this- there are many life skills that are only mainly obtained through good arts education. Like creativity and performing! These are skills that you will likely need- even if your career(s) are not based on arts education! But here is another mind blown that has been scientifically proven- creative thinkers are the main key to solving the world's problems. Yeah. Not only does giving schools arts education improve INDIVIDUAL lives, but it improves THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE! Creative thinking is EXACTLY what we need a lot of for future generations. Creative thinkers are basically what will make our society better- and schools can play a huge role in that. Another way arts education improves community is by giving students who are not the smartest a place to shine. Some kids are not the smartest in school, but you don't need to be a super smart kid to shine in an Arts program, you just need creativity and talent.

So, if you want to have kids play a part in saving society's problems, give students a good arts education. Not only will it improve their own lives, but will play a part in improving society as a whole."

Rachel parent of a 4th and 7th grader

Might be cheesy or cliché but I often think of the quote from rent

"The opposite of war isn't peace, it's creation"

They may not realize it, but being creative gives children a sense of purpose. Whether it's in art, music, dance, theater...In a nutshell, these programs help keep children out of trouble because they have something to focus on and somewhere to feel like they are making a contribution. This thought is extremely important for children who attend at risk schools and often come from broken homes.

Extremely important as well for LGBT and ASD/ADHD youth who often feel like outsiders and otherwise might have trouble finding friends or feeling accepted as they are.

My son barely spoke a word in the classroom. When he discovered theater and performing he found his voice. This gave him the confidence to finally speak up in class and be himself.

Skye, a 4th grade student said:

"We need art, theatre, and dance to complete ourselves. Not all schools have these special programs. All the kids who wind up with bad jobs or even going to jail probably never went to a school like Ella Baker that gives them the art education they needed. All those people who become scientist or authors probably spent most of their childhood being creative and imaginative."

"Culture is critical to the health and well being of NYC's neighborhoods during this crisis, and will be central to the city's recovery going forward. We are in crisis and need continued support now." Or more specific: "The current budget cuts discretionary funding, which will mean the end for many small organizations like ours, run by and serving communities of color most in need during this time. We ask you to restore funding for (CASA, Coalition of Theaters of Color, Immigrant Arts Initiative, etc)."

Keep it SHORT. You will have 2 minutes exactly. I highly recommend practicing and timing yourself so you can get in the most important parts of your message.

- **Share your personal story as much as possible.**
- **Cite Arts Are Essential at some point during the testimony.**
- **Keep the following prompts in mind: How has the arts allowed your students to grow and why is it important that arts funding be sustained.**
- **Be gracious; remember this Council are our allies; we're all in this together.**
- **For key messaging from the campaign, visit our Toolkit then go to the "Key Messaging" section.**

--Super short meaningful picture of your impact: ie, "We teach arts to 700 public school children in the Bronx. A former student wrote last week saying her classes with us kept her interested in school, and that she just graduated from college."

NOTE: Undoubtedly your organization has many different programs impacting many different populations. Now is not the time to list them all; choose one central part of your mission for this testimony. You can include the full list in the written statement.

--Short list of what you are doing NOW (or this summer) to serve your community, ie. "Our classes have continued online during the shutdown, providing enriching experiences to middle schoolers stuck at home in neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID."

NOTE: Even if what you are doing is simply staying in touch with your community, or raising funds for another relief program, the important message is that we are central parts of our communities and they need and trust us, whether it's for classes, conversation, connection, entertainment, enriching experiences, or other needs.

--Ask for support. This can be general: "Culture is critical to the health and well being of NYC's neighborhoods during this crisis, and will be central to the city's recovery going forward. We are in crisis and need continued support now." Or more specific: "The current budget cuts discretionary funding, which will mean the end for many small organizations like ours, run by and serving communities of color most in need during this time. We ask you to restore funding for (CASA, Coalition of Theaters of Color, Immigrant Arts Initiative, etc)."

NOTE: It is good to acknowledge that the Council is facing a crushing budget deficit, and that our city and our neighbors face enormous hardship. AND to reinforce that culture delivers a huge range of positive outcomes for New Yorkers and our neighborhoods. Culture is in crisis and needs support now so we can be here to help the city get through and recover.



229 W 42nd Street, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10036
646.223.3000

December 7, 2021

Dear City Council Committee on Education,

Thank you for convening a hearing on the "Impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic on Arts Instruction, Extracurriculars, and School-Related Social Activities." As the Vice President of Education & School Engagement at the New Victory Theater, it is my pleasure to share with you some of what we have learned during the past 20+ months as we partnered with schools and teachers to ensure students continued to have access to the joy of the performing arts during this difficult time.

New Victory Education programs are typically built around the shows on our stage, but when Covid forced the closure of our Theater, we immediately reached out to our education partners to learn how we could support them as they transitioned to remote learning. From the early days of the pandemic, we heard from teachers that they wanted their students to have in-depth performing arts experiences, despite not being able to attend live theater experiences.

To serve schools, as well as families, New Victory staff and Teaching Artists created a free web-based performing arts engagement program entitled New Victory Arts Break, which provides young people with creative stimulation, connection to others, excitement and curiosity, and comfort and empathy. Each weekly Arts Break unit introduced a new artistic genre, including Percussion, Puppetry, Magic and more. Led by New Victory Teaching Artists, who created content from their own homes, Arts Break episodes took kids on guided video explorations of art forms and encouraged kids to be creative.

When remote learning in NYC Public Schools began, New Victory shared Arts Break with its 1300+ partner classroom teachers, many of whom successfully incorporated the content into their virtual classrooms. One teacher reached out to say "we used your weekly Arts Break and made a school-wide puppetry contest, and the results were overwhelming! I know this is a stressful time for all of us and I thought it would give you some joy to know that you are still reaching our students."

New Victory Education staff has also provided free arts learning resources and support for thousands of NYC classroom teachers, including: digital, genre-specific arts integration guides geared to support Pre-K – 2nd grade virtual classrooms; and a digital program which repurposed archived performances of past New Victory shows and correlating education content into digital education units that introduced a variety of performing arts forms.

Additionally, in the 2020-21 school year, New Victory Teaching Artists visited educators' virtual learning spaces to help educate through activities that were designed to dive deep into performing art forms and culture, and which highlighted themes of social and racial justice. Teams of two New Victory Teaching Artists led live virtual Classroom Workshops from their own homes to encourage creative exploration. New Victory Teaching Artists are trained in trauma-informed practices and were sensitive to how students wanted to participate in the workshops.

For many students, participating in a New Victory Classroom Workshop was an opportunity to more deeply connect with their classmates, explore their own creativity, and importantly, to have fun. Classroom teachers noticed a much higher level of engagement during the Workshops, with students volunteering to participate and many more cameras on than at other times. At the culmination of a residency at PS 48, a student said, "This has been a hard time. But working with Heidi and Jamie (New Victory Teaching Artists), and working as a class to make stuff and be creative makes me feel like we can make it, we're gonna get through this."

I believe that our role as arts educators is to create opportunities for student agency, to give them the chance to make their own choices about how and what they create, and how they express themselves. The world is a very hard place right now, and the arts are a strong avenue for processing all the things that are happening within and without, for learning about others around you, for finding and using your voice, and moving others to make change, to understand you, and to hear what you have to say.

We moved mountains to make sure that the arts could remain an important part of kids' lives. We changed our approaches, using new technologies, and worked with teachers who were beyond overtaxed. We kept reaching out to teachers to provide them with as many resources and support as they needed, and helped them to think through how the arts could continue to be part of their kids' lives in meaningful ways.

We didn't give up, and we're seeing the benefits of that work. Previously, the entry point to our work was the shows on the New Victory stage. Based on the learnings from the start of the pandemic, we now have strong digital programs, engaging in-person performing arts, and in depth non-show-based content, all of which is still informed by our mission to grow and deepen our relationships with schools and teachers. Because we know how important the arts are to the health, development, and happiness of young people.

We are grateful for your support of arts education, and hope you can continue that support at the highest level possible in the coming years. Thank you.

Courtney J. Boddie
Vice President, Education & School Engagement
The New 42nd Street (New Victory Theater)

Andrea Palma
Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
December 6, 2021

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Andrea Palma, and I am an Education Associate for New York City Children's Theater where our mission is to promote literacy and social development through theater productions and arts in education programming in all five boroughs of NYC.

My role as an Education associate is to create partnerships with schools across NYC offering different programming that students and teachers alike can benefit from. Through our signature program, Literature at Play, we have been able to adapt the After School Reading Club, also known as ARC.

In the past we have been able to work with 36 homeless shelters for 28 weeks over the course of the school year, and sometimes during the summer months where a child's sense of structure and order can be compromised. ARC offered students a safe place to explore their creativity and create connections with their peers. ARC was a part of the Universal Literacy Initiative which launched in 2016 in hopes of ensuring that students would be reading at their grade level by the end of 2nd grade. ARC was an enrichment program that provided students throughout NYC in grades K-5 living in a homeless shelter the opportunity to achieve this goal, along with incorporating theater and music to develop their literacy skills. At one point ARC was serving 1,200 students!

The pandemic has brought on a lot of hardships across the globe especially in communities with fewer resources, and children in homeless shelters. The students and children who would benefit the most from this incredible program will not be able to experience it due to the loss of funding this year. These communities have faced devastating losses since March of 2020. More families are struggling to make ends meet, and the children of our city are experiencing tremendous instability in their home lives. Programs like the After School Reading Club could have been what these students needed in these difficult times and moments of uncertainty. The After School Reading Club served not only as an educational enrichment program, but enrichment of the arts. A place where the children of NYC could feel validated, creative, and safe.

I ask that you please do not let budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Without funding from these incredible agencies, we will not be able to deliver our arts programming to schools and homeless shelters at this time when the arts are imperative for healthy child development. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

New York City is the arts capital of the world. Let us continue that legacy by guaranteeing funding for the next generation of artists. The children directly affected by these cuts are the future of our city.

Sincerely,

Andrea Palma

I, Caitlyn McCain, will share a 2 minute testimony about my work as an arts educator and the importance of arts education funding.

Specifically, I will briefly address the impact of ARPA funding on my ability to reach students and engage with new/returning partner schools and share examples of successfully providing arts and cultural education this year and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. I also want to thank the Chancellor and DOE for their historic \$70M investment in federal stimulus funding being directed to arts learning.

Thank you,

Caitlyn McCain
Artistic Associate, New York City Children's Theater
Voice & Speech Instructor, Stella Adler Studio of Acting
CaitlynMcCain.com

BFA in Drama, NYU Tisch 2019
MA in Applied Theatre, CUNY SPS 2023

Nicole Hogsett

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
December 2, 2021

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Nicole Hogsett and I work at New York City Children's Theater (NYCCT) based in Manhattan, but serving students and families in all five boroughs of NYC.

The mission of New York City Children's Theater is to promote children's literacy and social development through theater productions and arts in education programming. Our programming fosters empathy and creativity across the city.

I'd like to begin by thanking the Chancellor and DOE for your \$70 million investment in federal stimulus funding being directed to arts education. It is a historic feat that is needed now more than ever. But funding the arts in schools has never been more important and there is a great need for funding to continue.

NYCCT's Education Department partners with over 100 schools, community centers, and homeless shelters to bring critical arts education programming to the classroom. Over the past two years, we've pivoted to provide that arts learning virtually due to COVID-19. Teachers have time and time again told us how important these programs are. One teacher noted, "Children come alive when they are provided a safe space to express themselves through the arts and this program does just that. Academically children take more risks and are more engaged because they have a new found confidence in expressing themselves."

It is well documented that students who participate in arts education programs have better academic and social-emotional outcomes, but we've seen it first-hand. We want to continue to be able to reach new and returning school partners with our programming, and we need your help to do that!

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Nicole Hogsett

December 7th, 2021

Testimony from Reagan Wilson regarding funding for Arts Education

I thank the City Council for the opportunity to remit this testimony. I have been fortunate enough to work in New York City Public schools as a teaching artist since 2015. I have taught a variety of arts disciplines to Kindergarten through High School. I continued teaching online when schools closed in March 2020. The continued funding for the arts in New York City is not just beneficial for New York City Students for many it is essential to their survival. The arts provide more than something to do. The arts support academic development, social emotional development, and self-awareness.

For PS295 the arts even taught online offered more than a break from their regular studies. In February of 2020 I began working as teaching artist at PS295 courtesy of Brooklyn Arts Council. When Schools closed in March, the students used instructional videos. The students were able to complete the final performance online with parents in attendance. In our celebration, we were all reminded that when life presents setbacks, we can still achieve our goals. I reunited with these online in April 2021. I entered our online classroom knowing that their regular PE teacher had left at the end of the school year, the new teacher had quit halfway through the semester, and their substitute teacher was new on the job. "One of the smartest things they did this year was to bring you back Ms. Rae." This comment was made by a 4th grader. These students were grateful for familiarity and stability, but they also understood that our brief time together meant an opportunity for self-expression and self-exploration.

For PS164 the arts provided more than something fun to do. In April 2021 I began working with a group of 1st graders in an English as a Second Language class. Many students spoke softly or tried to avoid speaking at all. These students were adjusting to social distancing in the classroom, being in a new country, and learning a new language. These students were self-conscious about their English language skills found a new form of freedom in taking diverse children's books and bringing them to life by acting out the story. It can be argued that any 1st-grade teacher can read a diverse storybook to their students. This is true which is why we went beyond reading a story. For 10 weeks we read a new book and performed an adaptation of that story. Students were able to transform into confident English-speaking characters every day. The arts help those who are shy and afraid to fly learn to soar.

For PS23 in Manhattan the arts provided more than some cool dance moves. Anger issues use the arts for healing and hope. In 2016 I was fortunate enough to work as a teaching artist with students at PS23 which provides education in English and ASL. You know you are making an impact when a 5th grader stops by your room to apologize for not being able to attend class. He could not participate because he choked another student a few days before. He didn't care about being suspended. For that student he did what he was supposed to do. Many parents tell their children that if someone else puts their hands on you that you fight back. He did what he was taught to do but was left with remorse about having to miss his favorite class and having broken his commitment to me. The arts prompted him to look for alternate ways to manage to his anger. He wasn't the only one. Other students who had routinely been "in trouble" started becoming role models for their classmates. This wasn't the only school. I've worked in a failing Bronx Middle School where students were subject to randomized metal detector days, and Brooklyn Elementary Schools where fights took place daily. In these environments that were filled with stress for students and staff, the arts were able to create moments of peace and joy. The arts can be used to help students with anger management, self-discipline, self-confidence, and strategic thinking for problem-solving.

New York City is beloved throughout the world and is home to many cultures. The arts industry makes up a substantial part of New York City's economy. New York City is a leader in the arts-- fashion, film, painting, theater, and music. Public Schools have not just an opportunity but a responsibility to educate students in an environment that supports learning and in industries that support future employment. The arts should not be accessible only to private schools or schools where parents are able to contribute financially. The disproportionate access to arts education can be solved by increased funding and a strategic allocation of funds. Making the arts inclusive and a right for every student will position the country's largest school district to become a world leader in education. Education is a right and the arts are an essential part of education. Without Public School provided field trips and arts education many students would miss the opportunity to learn more about themselves, about other cultures, and about the city they call home. Every year another graduating class enters the world having never seen a Broadway show, heard an Opera, or been to a museum. Every year another graduating class enters the world having never left their own borough, holding no knowledge of the diversity that awaits only a short train ride away. Every year another graduating class enters the world without the tools to enter arts-related careers a sector that accounts as of 2017 accounted for 13% of the city's total economic output (Comptroller NYC). Investing in arts education today is investing in our leaders of tomorrow. It would only make sense that NYC continues to financially support the arts as this is a reinvestment in creating future artists, leaders, investors, policy makers, and a strong community.

Thank you for your time and for your service to New Yorkers.

Regards,

Reagan A. Wilson



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American Airlines Theatre • Stephen Sondheim Theatre • Studio 54 • Black Box Theatre and Laura Pels Theatre at the Harold and Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre

Monday, December 6, 2021

Re: Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Arts Instruction, Extracurriculars, and School-Related Social Activities

To: NYC City Council's Committee on Education

Honored Committee Members of the New York City Council,

My name is Mitch Mattson, I'm the Director of Career Training for Roundabout Theatre Company, a nonprofit organization that spotlights classic plays and musicals from the past, cultivates new works of the present, and educates minds for the future.

On behalf of our leadership, staff, and the theatre communities we serve, it is an honor to address you during what is a critical time to advocate for arts education and arts integration in NYC public schools. As we return back to in-person learning, students and teachers are feeling vulnerable and uncertain in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely disrupted learning and critical socio-emotional development. Arts education – whether it be in classrooms, after school, or via exposure programs such as youth ensembles or career development programming – continues to be the antidote, offering outlets for self-expression and opportunities for interpersonal connection and collaboration, and most importantly, developing socio-emotional core competencies such as Self-Management, Social Awareness, and Responsible Decision Making.

Neither the pandemic nor the theatre industry's 18-month long shutdown stopped us from providing essential arts programming to NYC public schools. We remain deeply grateful to the City Council, DOE, and DCLA for their advocacy and vital support of arts organizations citywide, especially Education at Roundabout, to make that possible. Thanks to the City maintaining its contracts, grants and relationships with us, even as safety requirements and project scopes evolved, we remained committed to our belief in the importance and value of direct arts services in an immediate pivot to digital learning ensuring that our students stayed connected to professional theatre, artists, and Roundabout's own Teaching Artists' mentorship. Last year, Roundabout was thrilled to be invited by the DOE into the innovative Remote Arts Learning Partnership. The program that featured free curriculum, lesson plans, and recorded video activities was made available to 1.1 million students at over 1,800 New York public schools, as well as the general public and teachers across the country.

We thank DCLA and the City Council for their continuation of the CASA program and Member's Item funding, and the ongoing flexibility of those guidelines as the pandemic wears on and new variants emerge. We send a special thank you to the City Council's Open Culture Program this past summer, which allowed the Roundabout Youth Ensemble (RYE) to perform their final showcase of



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their original play in person safely. We are also grateful to Council Member Mark Treyger for a new \$5,000 Member's Item to support our work with P721K, a District 75 school in his district. Our commitment to students with disabilities remains a priority and it is our honor to expand that work during this time when support is needed in so many communities.

Indeed, the commitment to providing art safely to vulnerable communities is one of the reasons we are grateful to the City's vaccination efforts and requirements. The support of the Broadway League's vaccination requirements and the amendment to policy 250 has enabled us to bring students to Broadway in a manner that is safe for all audiences.

This year, Education at Roundabout is investing \$4.8 million in arts education services in NYC public schools and communities. That is more than double our investment last year, as our City's schools return to in-person instruction. In partnership with the NYC DOE, our initiatives serve over 24,000 students and educators across the five boroughs each year. Of our CASA and School Partnerships programming, the City government only covers 30% of those direct services. We are proud to be making such bold investments in our City, and we hope that the City continues to leverage its funding to support arts organizations' services during, after, and outside of school.

We kindly request your support in the following ways:

OUR SCHOOLS SHOULD...

- Underline the social emotional learning benefits of arts programming for students and make arts programming a priority in school communities.
- Provide access to arts opportunities for curricular support, creative expression, and communal growth for students and teachers.

OUR DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SHOULD...

- Articulate that the arts are an essential part of each student's education and encourage school leaders to direct resources to partnerships with schools.
- Hire more arts certified teachers across the school system, as there are fewer than 225 certified theatre teachers serving the 1,800 NYC public schools.

OUR CITY COUNCIL SHOULD...

- Leverage federal stimulus dollars to help increase financial support to the DOE for arts programs.
- Continue support of CASA and career training workforce programs.

In closing, we ask that the Council continue to offer financial support for arts programs which provides much needed and state mandated access to arts education for students. As financial



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uncertainty abounds, some school administrators still face the decision of whether or not to continue arts programming, while students who have never had access to the arts still struggle to gain access. We hope to work with the City to continue filling gaps in arts education, and not perpetuate those that existed pre-pandemic. With continued and expanded partnerships, schools and arts organizations can work together to find creative solutions to help communities.

This support should be to support schools and cultural organizations that provide direct services to students and teachers. I would be happy to speak with you further and answer any questions.

Thank you for all your work during these uncertain times.

Sincerely,

Mitch Mattson

Director of Career Training

mitchm@roundabouttheatre.org



To the City Council's Committee on Education: Impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic on Arts Instruction, Extracurriculars, and School-Related Social Activities

The 2020-21 school year was – of course! – challenging. Happily, we were able to provide a lot of online content to our partners, much of it at no cost to the schools. But this year Symphony Space is thrilled to see the schools jumping back into action in so many ways. Symphony Space has been providing quality arts education in the form of the **Global Arts: cultural literacy & heritage** program since 1980, partnering with many schools for almost that entire time. We were therefore so happy to see our partners return in force this fall. In addition, we will be working with a number of new schools this year. We are so excited about getting back into the classroom. It seems the teachers, students, and school administrators feel the same way. Here are some highlights:

July – August 2021 - Through the Summer Rising project, we partnered with PS40 on Ralph Ave. in Brooklyn, (District 41) developing a theater and dance residency culminating in a joyous outdoor cultural celebration for the families.

September – present – For the eighth year in a row, we are providing a dance residency to every class at PS 40K.

September – present – For the fifth year in a row, we are providing a choral music residency to every class at PS 86 on Reservoir Ave., in the Bronx, (District 11.)

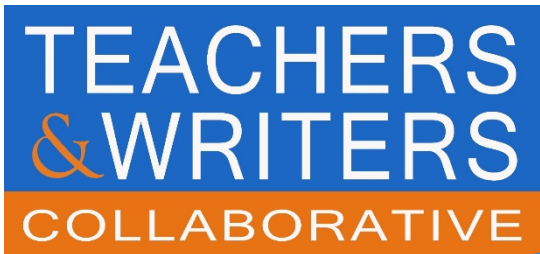
Starting in January 2022, we will be returning to some of our most longstanding partners, including PS 75 (District 6,) Lenox Academy/PS235 in Brooklyn (District 41,) and starting a new partnership with PS 63 in Queens (District 32,) bringing the performing and visual arts of cultures around the world to life through hands-on workshops and fully-produced interactive performances.

As a result of this uptick in activity, we are able to employ 37 teaching artists this year.

Most of our workshops will take place in person in the classrooms. However, we are able to provide virtual content both synchronous and recorded, and are ready to pivot from one to the other – or a hybrid – at any time. Like many venues, Symphony Space is following strict CDC guidelines; everyone entering the building must show proof of vaccination. For those who cannot come to our theater, we are able to provide our beautiful fully produced Global Arts performances as livestreamed events, with Title I schools attending for free. We currently have over 25 schools registered for these performances, which will be seen by approximately 50,000 students.

We are so grateful to the Chancellor and the Mayor for their understanding of the value of the arts in children's lives. We know how much creativity means during the most "normal" of times. Today, it is absolutely crucial.

For more information, please contact Regina.larkin@symphonyspace.org or visit <https://www.symphonyspace.org/education>



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My name is Asari Beale and I am the Executive Director of Teachers & Writers Collaborative (T&W). I am testifying on behalf of T&W's extended community of teachers, teaching artists, school administrators, students, and lifelong learners.

T&W was founded in 1967 as one of the first writers-in-the-schools programs. Since then, T&W has been a leader in this space, helping start other arts education programs in New York City — such as Urban Word and Elders Share the Arts — and across the country, and we are a founding member of the national Writers in the Schools Alliance. Each year, T&W fosters the creativity and talent of thousands of students in NYC public schools with innovative creative writing programs led by professional writers.

The correlation between arts education and increased student and parent engagement in school is well-documented. But what became most evident during the pandemic is the social-emotional benefits of our programs. Our programs gave students tools and a safe space to communicate complicated emotions, build relationships through collaboration, and give and receive encouragement from their peers. While we know how beneficial our programs are in the best of times, the feedback we received from administrators, classroom teachers and students reinforced how essential arts education programs like ours are during the most of challenging of times.

Following are two of the testimonials we received about our programs during the 2020-2021 school year:

From Clara Lin, teacher at P.S. 315 East Village Community School - “City of Water” poetry and environmental science program for 3rd grade students, with poet Libby Mislán, in partnership with the DEP:

“Two of my students who both have IEPs for learning disabilities find creative writing very difficult. One day after a few weeks of the program, they asked me for help writing a poem, telling me they didn't get one written during our meeting with Libby. They wanted to meet *after* school hours to complete the assignment, which really showed a commitment I didn't realize they had to the project. They met with me after school hours in a video meeting and we composed poetry together. The following week, they asked for a private meeting with me during the writing time so they could again write collaboratively with me. They really had fun and ended up feeling proud of themselves that they indeed *could* write poetry, just like everyone else. Finally, sharing poetry weekly and asking students to share words, phrases, lines etc from poems that popped out to them was a wonderful way to build community. Kids responded to others' poems with comments like ‘1000 snaps

for you!’ and ‘what a creative way to say that.’ Building online community is really difficult, but I’m so glad that the community we already built meant that kids were open to being vulnerable in sharing their poetry and support to each other providing feedback. We really loved the program and already miss it!”

From Rick Bonacorsi, Guidance Counselor, Lehman High School, Bronx - Personal narrative/college application essay writing with writer David Surface:

“David’s one-on-one sessions were extremely helpful to students in regard to improving their essays. Students spoke to me about how helpful he was, and they wish they had even more time with him. Furthermore, David showed genuine enthusiasm in regard to supporting students; he really seemed to care about their stories. I couldn’t have asked for a better person.”

These testimonies underscore the unique value a teaching artist brings to a classroom and the lasting impact of arts education on our students.

I also want to share a couple of the challenges our organization has experienced as a Dept. of Education vendor.

First, like many other arts education organizations, we have experienced frustrating delays with the PETS fingerprinting system.

Second, T&W is uniquely challenged as a literary arts organization. The State and City Departments of Education do not recognize poetry, fiction, personal narrative, and play writing as “arts,” and instead include creative writing in ELA standards. As a result, we do not benefit from the resources and access to schools (eg. through vendor fairs) that are available to other arts education organizations through the Office of Arts and Special Projects. We currently have a “Student Support Services” MTAC, but the requests posted by schools are almost never a match for what we offer. As a result, it is a challenge for us to connect with new school partners who may benefit from our unique programs. We plan to apply for an “Arts Education” MTAC (for playwriting and programs that combine writing with other arts disciplines), but the application is onerous, especially for our small and already stretched staff.

Over and over, classroom teachers and school administrators expressed their appreciation for the level of engagement T&W teaching artists were able to achieve with their students during a time when remote learning made student engagement an uphill battle. On behalf of the students we serve, I ask the City Council to do what it can to make it easier for organizations like ours to bring our valuable arts education programs to New York City schools.



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Testimony from Asari Beale, Teachers and Writers Collaborative, for the hearing of the Committee on Education taking place on December 6, 2021, 10am, will be submitted at a later date, prior to the hearing.

Together *in* Dance

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Leslie Platt Zolov Laurie Basloe Limor Tomer Roslyn Biskin Karen Curlee Bharat Didwania Laura Patinkin Urken

Monday, December 6, 2021

Dear City Council Members on the Education Committee,

My name is Katie Palmer. I am the Executive Director of Together in Dance, a small creative movement and musical theater arts education not-for-profit operating in New York City for 21 years.

Firstly, thank you very much for all of your time and for your service to our city. And congratulations to those Council members who have held your seats for eight years, or possibly longer. I hope you enjoy these last few weeks representing our incredible City, and wish you luck on all your next endeavors.

Together in Dance, in addition to burgeoning programming for older adults and a robust mentoring and professional development series for our Teaching Artists, provides Creative Movement and Musical Theater residencies to public school students throughout New York City, focusing mostly in elementary schools.

Like everyone else, the pandemic hit Together in Dance really hard. Thanks to emergency grants from the federal and City governments and DCLA's recognition of the valuable part Arts and Culture plays in the recovery, Together in Dance still provided programming during the pandemic and were able to make a major difference in our school communities.

One of our schools on the border of Woodside and Elmhurst in Queens, really went through it last year, 2020-2021. Their beloved Assistant Principal passed away in the winter, their long-term principal left, and many of the parents of the students are essential workers and under many stressors. Through this shifting and grieving, and their budget being decimated and completely uncertain, Together in Dance was able to offer the only arts partnership program of the year. Together in Dance provided a few weeks of movement, creativity, and laughter through Zoom, and the students lit up. They came to class eager to move and connect, turning the potential limitations of space and distance into a field of discovery and invention. Everyone could feel the lift in the students and teachers, and Together in Dance was able to provide a bright spot in an otherwise very dim school year.

My second story is possible because of the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Because of this money and support, one of Together in Dance's former partner schools is able to reestablish programming this 2021-2022 school year. The elementary school, located in Canarsie, Brooklyn, was a long term partner of Together in Dance and had to stop working with us several years ago due to a complete lack of funds. But with this influx of ARPA money, Together in Dance is now providing 10-11 weeks of dance and musical theater programming to every student in every

grade K through 5. That was literally impossible for the previous five years, and now it is possible. This money is a game changer and life changer.

But the demand is so high and even this incredible influx of money is not enough. The Office of Arts and Special Projects with the Department of Education runs the Arts Partnership Grants: Arts and Family Engagement Grants and Arts for English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities Grant. It is my understanding that for this 2021-2022 school year, 479 schools applied for 265 grants. That is 211 schools, tens of thousands of students, who will not receive the robust arts education opportunities their peers will get — 44% of the schools who applies will not receive funding. Yes, this year, there is the ARPA additional money. But every school Together in Dance works with who applied for the OASP money is hoping to use both - ARPA and the Art Partnership grants. That's how high the demand is and how deep the understanding that the arts is exactly what we need right now.

The competitive nature of the Office of Arts and Special Projects grants is also turning Arts Education into a privilege not a right, thereby expanding the inequity already baked into our system. The interest and need exceeds resources currently allotted. Educators all over New York City recognize how important and valuable Arts Education is, now more than ever.

We know that the City is still in crisis. But, better than just about any industry, Arts Education is nimble, flexible, and limitlessly creative. Please let us be a partner with you and we co-create the New York City we all want to live in.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katie B. Palmer".

Katie Palmer

Executive Director, Together in Dance

Diana Crum, Independent Artist, Educator and Arts Worker
Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
November 29, 2021

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts and cultural programming. I have worked in the arts and in education for the past 15 years. Currently, my active roles include Interim Director of Education and Chair of Dance at Usdan Summer Camp for the Arts; Dance Teacher at German School Brooklyn; and Teaching Artist at Brooklyn Arts Council, ArtsConnection and New Jersey Performing Arts Center. In addition, I spent the 2020-21 school year working for the NYC Department of Education as a Substitute Teacher four days a week at Arts and Letters 305 United.

I wrote to you over a year ago in support of arts education. Today, I write for the same reasons, which only grow increasingly urgent and obvious. New York City students need arts education more than ever. **The arts build community, foster social discourse, and help with mental and emotional health.** With students reeling from the effects of the pandemic, these needs are crystal clear. **Now more than ever, we need the City of New York to support robust, active, arts education programming in every public school.**

- 1) **The arts build community.** When the school buildings closed, our students lost an important place, where they could count on seeing their friends and a team of supportive adults. Online, gathering the same community was difficult. School art events successfully brought students, teachers, administrators and family members back together. We gathered to watch videos, hear music and look at visual works. These events are vital in rebuilding our school communities, particularly when families have been isolated at home and inequities are increasing.
- 2) **The arts are a vital forum for social discourse.** After the death of George Floyd, when Black Lives Matters took the streets, (again), we, educators, didn't know how to talk about it with students. Performance events, visual art works, and creative writing have helped us and our students process current events. They gave us vehicles for expression and ways to engage with what otherwise felt overwhelming. New Yorkers need creative, rich modes of expression to understand complex histories and hear multiple perspectives. Artists and art works help us collectively share our points of view, learn from one another and enhance our understandings.
- 3) **The arts add to mental, emotional and physical health.** Students have returned to school buildings with high amounts of anxiety. At camp last summer, one out of twelve dance students suffered from regular panic or anxiety attacks. In the spring of 2019, in my role as a dance teacher, I often asked students to participate in a weekly movement class. For full credit, they had to write down how they felt before and after the class. Consistently, across ages, they responded with comments like "this class calmed me down," "I feel better afterwards," and "I feel less stress." Participation in the arts helps relieve anxiety. It has a real effect on the health of New Yorkers. When so many New Yorkers have had their daily routines disrupted and many face added financial stress, we need ways to take care of ourselves. The arts help us maintain our health.

We need art. It keeps us engaged. It builds our communities. And it offers us ways to process our current events. It is paramount to a healthy, thriving society.

As demonstrators call for a defunding of the NYPD, we must see the connection to the debate around arts funding. The arts foster a healthy society. A healthy society has less need of jails, hospitals and police than an unhealthy one. The arts are a preventative measure that saves the City billions of dollars in corrective and punitive costs later. I have no doubt that my colleagues from New Yorkers for Culture and Arts and Arts in Education Roundtable, among others, are sharing important data that demonstrates the incredible scope of arts in the city. I hope that you appreciate the numbers they share and understand the very real impact that the numbers represent. #ArtsAreEssential. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely, Diana Crum

When I read the many similarly-themed articles and coverage about child care, education, and the economy that have emerged since COVID-19 shut down our schools last year, I am transported back to an 18-month-old conversation that haunted my 2020 just before 2020 cursed everyone. The leading question seems to be:

To what extent is our educational system really just child care?

As an educator and not-for-profit arts organization employee, however, I add this:

What is the burden on that system, its students, and the ensuing consequences on the country at large, if teaching is always under-funded and secondary to care?

After watching an almost 2-year hiatus from traditional education practice evaporate without any substantive changes, I'm concerned.

My haunting phone call happened in February 2020. I was speaking with a representative from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and wondering, as I had often before this call, and many aggravated times since, how my work as Education Director for Wingspan Arts, an arts education not-for-profit organization, crossed-over with the DOHMH's area of expertise: the physical and mental health and safety of NYC. Surely oversight from the Department of Education or the Department of Youth and Community Development would be more appropriate for substantive and meaningful feedback and evaluation for an organization like Wingspan with a mission:

to enrich the lives of young people in and around New York City through multi-disciplinary arts education programs both in and out of the classroom.

While the DOHMH states that its work is "broad-ranging," I questioned why I was now speaking with this representative over what seemed like one of the most unlikely reasons: the presence of LEGO at one of Wingspan's Afterschool programs. It wasn't that our program was found to be unsafe or unhealthy. There was no concern expressed about our staff to student ratio. Nothing was mentioned about our spaces being unclean (we operate in NYC DOE public schools, so this would have also been a violation for the DOE Operations Department). Not one staff interaction with a student was raised as alarming. The only issue: LEGO.

The DOHMH runs a permit program called SACC (School-Age Child Care), and prior to my tenure, Wingspan Arts afterschool was classified as exempt from SACC as it was ruled a "Single-Purpose Program." (If you're interested, the language surrounding SACC and its exemptions can be found [here](#). Good luck! To me, it writes and un-writes itself into questionable loops.) While I didn't give SACC much mind, I wanted to be an informed new employee; so, as an early group exercise, I asked my 4-person team to read this same linked document. The confounding conclusion was that all "Single-Purpose" exemptions were content and structure focused, promoting the idea that a program didn't need to have SACC as long as it offered only a very specific, stay-in-your-one-lane, form of education.

Not particularly progressive or interesting in terms of educational practice, but if that's how the DOHMH wanted to define us, leaving Wingspan alone to not pay into a very expensive (as would be felt by our families), very delayed (it's NYC bureaucracy at its finest), and once-received, quite limiting (just look at the [requirements](#)), therefore exclusive, licensing structure, so be it. We independently created rubrics for the physical and mental safety of our students, largely based on DOE-standards. Who needs the DOHMH to dictate safety standards, anyway?

And it was on this February 2020 call, I was unconvincingly, but passionately, trying to justify the art of LEGO to a public health advocate. These types of calls and communications were becoming alarmingly frequent. A few weeks earlier, an anonymous 311 call made in complaint of a Wingspan program led to DOHMH raids, I'll call them, at multiple program sites. Each of these episodes was followed by calls or emails from reps asking questions about the program. Never about the program's health or safety, mind you. Just about its content. From the remarks made, it was clear the DOHMH and I had fairly different ideas of safe student engagement.

Regardless, the 311 call, what I largely assume to be the revenge tactic of a contracted Teaching Artist whom I did not extend into the next semester, started to unwind a then almost 2-decades old not-for-profit, its 15-school network of arts education afterschool programs (its main source of income), the thousands of families that had and were benefiting from its service since 2001, and, in this moment, me: someone pushed too far by this latest DOHMH call, and the rep's question of LEGO as art, that almost broke me.

In the following weeks, and the resulting work to rectify what we didn't even know needed fixing, the DOHMH ruled:

#1) Wingspan Arts was now in violation of the same SACC requirements from which it was originally ruled exempt. Single-Purpose was now interpreted as something else (although the written definitions for it were frustratingly the same) and in this new view, LEGO (among other things) and art could not co-exist in a single program.

NOTE: Most conveniently the person who previously granted exemption to the Wingspan program had retired without any official exemption on file or available. Merely a paper trail of old emails.

Also,

2) By including Pre-K students in the afterschool program, we were in violation of not having a Group Child Care Center-Based Permit. In full transparency, before this situation, this Permit was not something Wingspan Arts even knew it needed. It was also not something that any of our school contacts knew anything about, nor was it something requested or mentioned by the Department of Education's Permit Office, with which we were authorized to run programs.

So, guilty of program diversity, and what seemed like bureaucratic and universal ignorance?

My small team immediately started notifying our families of class changes and cancellations: to include only classes that mention ART in the title and description and to eliminate all Pre-K students. Our new experiences were to be siloed, with each art form needing to stand separately: musical theater (which is inherently a hybrid art form, but I digress), (non-musical) theater, music, visual art, or dance. No crossover. No inclusion of anything else (e.g. Culinary Art, Martial Art, or, shhh! LEGO). As the news travelled through the boroughs and among our families and school partners, very understandable concerns and displeasures were expressed, especially when it was understood that the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is involved:

1. Is my student safe?
2. What am I going to do with my 4-year-old daughter? I work until 5pm in Brooklyn.
3. How do I tell my kid their favorite LEGO class is canceled?

As someone being asked the question directly by families and schools, it felt terrible not to have a concise answer to help calm the confusion and misunderstanding. Lucky for me, I needed no such rehearsed response for very long as COVID-19 permanently suspended my performance as the apologetic and confused not-for-profit employee. This new bleak reality, sadly allowing me too much time to answer these questions, originally asked by Wingspan's families and school partners, but now echoed by all of America (especially the women who have been so disproportionately impacted), to make the following realizations:

1. We are entirely dependent as an economy on educators as child care providers.
2. Education is under-valued, under-developed, and largely poorly executed as a one-size-for-all operation.
3. While almost every other way of American life has progressed since the country's inception, education is almost exactly the same.

The reason for all of this is, of course, profit.

Of course to some extent Wingspan was providing child care (as we now understand is the basic function of every teacher, class facilitator, and camp counselor); but it was through an art-focused program we attempted to offer this service. Like many of my colleagues in the arts education field, I entered the not-for-profit world as an artist manager in order to support the artistic fields that have and had meant so much to me since I needed them as a way to imagine myself out of feeling "othered" as a young person. In my want to create similar spaces for other young people, I was suddenly being told I was in violation. This is not a dissimilar refrain I hear from public school teachers: wanting to be of true service to students, but instead needing to meet unjustifiable standards without time or pay to plan interactive, dialogical, and imaginative lessons by themselves, or, DOHMH-forbid, with colleagues. Education is still based on what we think students should know and not how people best learn.

And as we implemented new schedules to satisfy the DOHMH, of siloed ART-only, LEGO-less classes, I was thinking many things. First, I really wanted to keep my job, which was dependent on Wingspan running a robust afterschool program that kept the entire organization afloat. But to my original question, the one with global implications, I was disheartened that interdisciplinary learning, arguably the most effective style of teaching to engage multiple intelligences and learning styles, was being ruled impossible. And while a tactically diverse, whole-body, connection-rich approach runs throughout the Blueprints for Teaching and Learning in the Arts, created by the DOE's Office of Arts and Special Projects, it was clearly not a mentality shared by its sister Department, which was somehow given the jurisdiction to approve or disapprove of programs like Wingspan Arts.

I've worked in not-for-profit education for over a decade in NYC. I knew well that many not-for-profit organizations are formed to serve a public good and be of "educational" value, as per the IRS guidelines and mandates. Created by the Federal Government, seemingly as a backwards way to acknowledge that there are many areas of essential, often human services, that it cannot support or manage through tax dollars or personnel. Since it couldn't fund these initiatives, it gave these organizations two "gifts": a pass on paying taxes, and the ability to accept donations, all chased relentlessly from the same 3 main sources: wealthy and/or generous individuals, foundations, and charitable-giving arms of corporations. Many of these corporations, of course, as we learn time and time again, only have such wealth due to tax evasion practices that continually overfill its coffers, therefore enabling it to be seen as altruistic and gain public trust. And the very act of its giving to a small not-for-profit, like Wingspan Arts, just provides extra loopholes to not pay a tax bill, that if actually paid, could end poverty, homelessness, hunger, and educational inequity. If you follow my angry logic, this means our government could actually provide the basic parameters of safety to empower every single human being.

And where would that leave us? With the dream of most every not-for-profit: the ability to celebrate each other through programs that promote compassion and critical thinking- the very ideas that propels art, culture, and actually effective education. But not-for-profits, which includes this country's entire public education system and many cultural enterprises, is a bit of a misnomer, assigned to organizations that actually need profit to sustain its employees, and fund programs that serve its diverse clientele in ways the government has decided it cannot and will not.

Well, I feel I have no choice but to call out the government for not being able to recognize the damage it is willing to perpetuate by its bifurcated power struggle. It makes it appear much more complicated than the simple truth that for capitalism to function, money needs to flow, especially to the basic things that do not independently generate wealth, but that afford humans to be humane. All those things for which not-for-profits tend to make entire missions are certainly not the same values or priorities employed by seemingly any elected member of government. Why then am I surprised that the trickle down to the local government agencies just perpetuates this idea of money for power.

The federal government is now fighting itself again to neglect what could be a huge public service: universal Pre-K. Yet, based on my experience with SACC and the DOHMH, I have to wonder what kinds of organizations will be cleared to run such a practice and at what cost? I can't imagine any student of today's screen and media-saturated world, let alone a 3-year-old, having much interest in a single activity for the entire length of an afterschool program; I truly wish these organizations luck keeping students engaged and safe without multiple things to offer... and then to offer... and offer. To the families looking forward to the possibility of such a service and reality, I say the same things I've repeated to the many Wingspan Arts families asking why we can't be the same type of program they valued for so long, a program about art, culture, and actually effective education-- those silly not-for-profit things, and that's: Okay, but don't expect LEGO. And if you do, remember, you'll be SACC'ed at the price!

Hello. My name is Yvonne Roen. I am a Teaching Artist and Government and Board Relationship Manager with New York City Children's Theater. I'm here today to discuss the importance of Arts Education to the students of New York City.

Multiple research studies support the notion that students who engage in the study of the arts perform better in math, reading, and writing and have increased cognitive development as well as higher verbal SAT scores.

These students also show a greater capacity for higher-ordered thinking skills such as analyzing and problem-solving as well as a greater capacity for positive self-expression, social tolerance, and self-confidence.

In other words arts education is exactly the kind of guidepost that can benefit the young people navigating the NYC school system in a mid-pandemic world.

Last year New York City Children Theater's offered synchronous digital music and theater programs to over 4,500 public school students. The same trauma-informed programs we shared we these students formed the basis of our long-standing partnership with the DOE's After-School Reading Club (known as ARC). Through this program, we served students

living in the NYC Shelter System in each of the five boroughs.

Disappointingly, the DOE has discontinued funding for ARC. The 1 in 10 public school students who are likely to experience some form of housing insecurity this year do not have access to this literacy and resilience building program.

To give a personal account, one young student who I met in the ARC program later showed up in one of my in-class residencies. I had not seen him for a few weeks as his family had, gratefully, found a secure place to live. He ran up grabbed my hand and said :Teacher, Teacher this is HER. This is the story lady. His teacher later told me that during his time in the shelter not only had his reading surprisingly improved, but his connection to stories and his love of learning had become a model and source of support for his fellow classmates who he cheered on as they learned to be better readers along side him.

Those of us who bring Arts Education into Public schools build minds. We build hearts. We build communities. ARPA funding helped us keep and build school partnerships at a time when our whole industry felt dangerously imperilled. Please continue to fund arts education at similar levels in this and in coming years. The young people of New York City deserve nothing less.

Thank you.



Committee of Education December 6, 2021, Testimony

My name is Cathy Hung. I am the Executive Director of Young Audiences New York (YANY), a 70-year-old nonprofit organization in New York City and one of the oldest, who dedicated its mission to arts education.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the impact arts education has on our children and how your support can help the over 1 million public school students in a turbulent time.

As an arts education program provider for 70 years, we have the unique opportunity of seeing first-hand the impact the arts have on our students by providing a **safe space** for them to think, to create, and to build their problem-solving skills and expanding their emotional capacity.

Our experience has also shown us that including arts education programming in the schools improves the overall learning environment by empowering and **invigorating** teachers, **motivating** students, and promoting livelier and deeper class discussions.

I don't need to recount the success and positive impact that arts programming brings to our schoolteachers and students. While we are trying to untangle the equity issue, I would like to say that Arts Education is the best **equalizer** for our children today, particularly for the vulnerable ones.

During the lockdown, YANY quickly pivot everything to online learning and teaching from teaching artists' own living rooms and kitchen tables. As schools reopened to in-person learning, YANY was the first there to bring the arts to scores of eager young students and to provide customized workshops supporting principals and classroom teachers in the constantly changing environment today. YANY never close the doors of cultural learning with any of our school partners.

Our more than 60 professional working artists travel to hard-to-reach neighborhoods in all five boroughs to enlighten students, rain or shine, because we believe in our work and the impact we have on our students and the American ideal of **belonging**.

However, the loss of work during the order to lockdown is beyond imaginable for our teaching artists. Thanks to the PPP loan that we were able to sustain their employment.

Understandably, there are different priorities in the war with global pandemic today, but the indefinite delay on the **procurement** process has a tremendous impact on our financial situation.



Currently, YANY has 2 community school contract and couple of CASA, plus grant from DCLA. It is almost a million dollars in our earned revenue. In the previous fiscal year, we didn't see the first dollar of those funding until May. Most likely, it will be the same situation this year, which means that we will have 10 months of gap in our finance. Last year, we were able to make by because of the PPP loan. This year, we won't be able to survive with the same delay.

I would like to ask the committee to help improving the streamline of the process and to consider our children's mental health and their future as a better and a more productive citizen be one of your priorities by providing dedicated resources to our school principals and cultural partners like YANY, and a policy to protect our working teaching artists.

In closing, I would like to share a story from one of our Community Schools. It's a 1,000-student elementary school, located in a lower-income Bronx neighborhood, one of New York City's poorest. Nearly 100 percent of the students who go there are eligible for the free lunch program. Viewed from the outside, the school is a nondescript two-story building. Scaffolding covers the front part that faces the street. But inside the school, it's a different story. Student works of art—colorful drawings and paper cut-outs and large-type poems—are displayed throughout the hallways, creating an arts-rich environment that motivates students and makes for a nurturing place to attend school.

This Bronx elementary school used to be on the infamous SURR (Schools Under Registration Review) list, threatened with closure if it did not significantly improve the academic standing of its students. In 2007 fall, this same school received an impressive 'B' grade from the Department of Education on its progress report. How did the school turn itself around?

Speaking last week to the principal, I discovered that she does not have a strong arts background. "But what I do have," she told me, "is proof that the arts enrich my school's curriculum and make a strong impact on my students and teachers."

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Cathy Hung
Executive Director
Young Audiences New York

Hi, my name is Laura Bozzone. I am the performing arts program manager at New York Edge, which is an after school non profit organization serving over 40,000 New York City public school students in underinvested communities. The mission of New York Edge is “to help bridge the opportunity gap among students in underinvested communities by providing programs designed to improve academic performance, health and wellness, self-confidence, and leadership skills for success in life.” One of the main ways we do this is by providing quality arts programs.

When we went remote in March 2020, we like so many art organizations, transitioned all our art classes to an online platform. In one of our middle school dance classes, students learned pop culture dances as well as dances from various generations. Each class ended in a big dance party and it was a great way to connect and feel moments of joy as well as for students to feel physical release at a time when they were confined to their homes. We had one student named Skye who signed on to our dance class every single day and I watched her express herself so fully and freely. After the first week of our dance class, the director from her school at MS 57k emailed me the following:

I wanted to reach out and share my appreciation for putting together the e-learning for our students. I know we are all struggling to get students online and attending and that there are a million reasons why it is difficult for many, but I wanted to share a small indication of the impact these art classes can have. Our student Skye has attended every single dance class with Ms. Brittney this week and this is after she lost her mother to Covid 19 last Friday. These classes have served as a source of comfort for her and really highlights the impact we can have at a time like this.

Skye continued to join every virtual dance class we had that month. Although she never expressed what she was going through in words, she expressed what she needed to by dancing and knowing she had a space and community which gave her comfort during a horrific time.

This is just one example of how life saving an arts class can be, and yet we continue to have to advocate for them in schools and in after school programs. As students like Skye are processing the trauma of the pandemic, art programs are essential because they provide students with a space to express complicated feelings, to build self management skills, to practice decision making and to find comfort in relationships and community. Now more than ever, I urge you to make quality arts education accessible for all students in every school in our wonderful city. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Laura Bozzone

Members of the council, I hope this testimony reaches you well. I reach out to day to emphasize the importance of continued support of arts in education programs in our NYC schools. How do I know the importance of this education? I have worked in this field for my entire career, seen the positive transformation it can create in children's lives, read the numerous studies that document the truth of this statement, and additionally, am myself a beneficiary of such education programs. I am the Youth and Family Programs Director for Mark Morris Dance Group, located in the heart of the Brooklyn Cultural District and working in numerous schools throughout the boroughs of New York City to provide high quality dance and music education. The ARPA support that has been dedicated to ensuring the survival of these programs allows our students to continue to develop the critical thinking, collaborative, creative choice, and communication skills at the heart of our dance curriculum. It ensures that students have movement as a part of their day, as opposed to trying to stay focused while being told to sit still for an 8 hour day. In short, it helps support the development of emotionally expressive, physically active humans, and we know that those are healthy humans in both body and mind. Without your continued support, these programs would disappear, the benefits for children would disappear, and the income of hundreds of thousands of artist New Yorkers would disappear. Please renew your support for this funding. We depend on you.