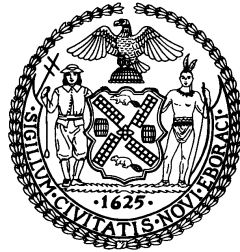


Staff: Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries
and International Intergroup Relations
Brenda McKinney, *Legislative Counsel*
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THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

**COMMITTEE REPORT OF
HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION**

Jeffrey Baker, *Legislative Director*
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**COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

Hon. Jimmy Van Bramer, *Chair*

April 29, 2019

**Oversight: The Cultural After School Adventures (CASA) Initiative: Bringing Arts & Culture
to New York City Public School and Enriching the Lives of Students**

I. Introduction

On Monday, April 29, 2019, the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations, chaired by Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer, will conduct an oversight hearing on *The Cultural After School Adventures Initiative: Bringing Arts & Culture to New York City Public School and Enriching the Lives of Students*. Witnesses invited to testify include representatives from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), advocacy groups, arts organizations, school principals, teaching artists, and organizations focused on youth and cultural programming, and other interested stakeholders.

II. Background

Initiative Overview

The Cultural After School Adventures (CASA) initiative, established in Fiscal Year (FY) 2006,¹ is a partnership between DCLA and the City Council, which provides an array of high-quality arts and cultural experiences to youth enrolled in after-school activities in NYC.² Building upon research that establishes numerous reasons that art, creativity, and cultural activities are important for young people and their development,³ CASA initiative sites are selected by individual Council Members and are run as a partnership between one of 173 different CASA organizations (or “CASAs”) and a local school in that organization’s area.⁴ This structure enables the students at these schools to work with CASA-recruited and trained “teaching artists” over a number of weeks or months. The CASA initiative requires that each CASA organization/school-pair meets a minimum of 15 times per funding period, but groups often meet more and the variance depends on the project.⁵ Projects vary from site to site, but are often suited to the needs of the school and students.⁶ These include anything from undertaking large mural projects to taking part in workshops in jazz, blues, percussion, poetry, puppetry, dance, printmaking, storytelling, chorus, theatre, film-making, and culinary arts, among others.⁷ In terms of other communicated strengths

¹The City Council of the City of New York, *Fiscal Year 2019 Adopted Expense Budget Adjustment Summary/Schedule C, Cultural After School Adventure (CASA)* 1, 22 (2018), available at <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2018/06/Fiscal-2019-Schedule-C-Final-Report.pdf>.

² See, e.g., The Center for Arts Education, *Cultural After School Adventures* (last visited Apr. 19, 2019), available at <https://centerforartsed.org/programs/partnership-programs/cultural-after-school-adventures>

³ See, e.g., Valerie Strauss, *The Top Ten Skills Children Learn from the Arts*, WASHINGTON POST (Jan. 22, 2013), available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/01/22/top-10-skills-children-learn-from-the-arts/>; Grace Hwang Lynch, *The Importance of Art in Child Development*, PBS (Jan. 22, 2013), available at <http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/music-arts/the-importance-of-art-in-child-development/>; <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002002.htm>

⁴ NYC Cultural Affairs. (2019). City Council Initiative Designations: Fiscal 2019 Guidelines and & Funding Requirements. Available from https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dcla/downloads/pdf/initiative_guidelines.pdf

⁵ Document on file with Council Staff (April 2019).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

and takeaways of the program, various programs sites have communicated that, through the CASA initiative, students receive opportunities to develop performance and public speaking skills, negotiate with others in their group to communicate their ideas, learn about their own culture and the world around them, and share their ideas, often in an original piece of music, artwork, or theatre for family, friends, school staff, and potentially the community or other artists.⁸

CASA Initiative: Program Structure

The CASA initiative is administered on a day-to-day basis by DCLA, which, according to the *CreateNYC Cultural Plan*, served over 19,850 students while employing over 1,100 teaching artists in wide-ranging and diverse art disciplines during the 2015-2016 school year alone.⁹ To participate in the initiative, local organizations apply for both the CASA and City Council discretionary funding.¹⁰ Each Council Member is provided with a number of initiative designations and tasked with allocating funds to each of the organization-school pairs.¹¹ Once selected, and therefore found eligible for the program, each cultural organization and their NYC public or charter school partner then receives an award letter and Grant Agreement, which enables them to move forward with providing after-school arts education programming for that school's students.¹² Eligible organizations may then also recruit students from their designated schools.¹³

Depending upon the school, CASA projects may take place one or two days per week, for approximately two hours a day, for a total of 15 to 16 weeks or 15 sessions total.¹⁴ The program is

⁸ See, e.g., Creative Arts Team, *After-School* (last visited Apr. 19, 2019), available at <https://creativeartsteam.org/programs/after-school>.

⁹ The NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, *Create NYC: A Cultural Plan for All New Yorkers* 1, 116 (July 2017), available at http://createnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CreateNYC_Report_FIN.pdf.

¹⁰ Discussion various CASA organizations (April 2019).

¹¹ NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, *City Council Initiatives (FY 2019 Application)* (last visited April 23, 2019), available at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dcla/about/initiative-application.page>.

¹² NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, *City Council Initiative Designations (FY 2019 Guidelines)* (last visited April 23, 2019), available at https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dcla/downloads/pdf/initiative_guidelines.pdf.

¹³ Document on file with Council Staff (April 2019).

¹⁴ *Id.*

run at the site-level by CASA program personnel, which includes teaching artists, who receive support from on-site school administrative assistants at each of the public and charter schools, and other technical and production staff as necessary.¹⁵ Each CASA project has at least one culminating event, which is an opportunity for students to exhibit their works of art for fellow students, parents and members of the community.¹⁶ These culminating events take place at various locations, which may include the school or at the partnering cultural institution (e.g. a museum or gallery). Examples of some recent CASA projects include school garden sculptures, mosaic murals, documentary films, choral or other music concerts, and costume making.¹⁷

Additionally, at the end of each initiative cycle, generally in the spring, the cultural organization submits a CASA Initiative Final Report and project synopsis to DCLA, detailing the funded project(s) at each site.¹⁸ These reports often touch on participant partnerships between teaching artists, organizational and school staff, in greater detail to highlight the process of each program, in addition to describing program achievements, challenges, and detailed budget and expense information for all reported activities.¹⁹ Because Initiative designations are made with public funds, DCLA also monitors the expenditure of those funds during each CASA program cycle, also assigning a program manager to for each organization-school pair to work with.²⁰ DCLA also completes performance evaluations based on a review of the quality and timeliness of the documents submitted, site visits, and program reviews.²¹

¹⁵ Document on file with Council Staff (April 2019).

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

VII. CONCLUSION

At this hearing, the Committee will seek to learn more about the various programs run through the CASA initiative, including hearing from organizations, schools, and especially involved students about experiences with the program and feedback for improving it going forward. The Committee will also consider what efforts the City can make, in partnership with DCLA, cultural groups, advocates, and other community groups, to ensure that youth receive opportunities for expression and to engage with cultural programs at all ages and in all parts of the city.