



The Center for Arts Education is committed to stimulating and sustaining quality arts education as an essential part of every child's education in the New York City public schools.

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

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

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THE CENTER FOR ARTS EDUCATION

Research & Policy Briefing

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New Analysis Shows Funding for Arts Instruction Insufficient and on the Decline in Yonkers City Schools

8 of 10 Schools Say Arts Education Funding Insufficient--School Budget Gap Threatens Further Cuts

KEY FINDINGS

Almost eight out of every ten Yonkers public schools report that funding for arts education is insufficient and four out of ten report a decline in arts spending over the three most recent school years for which data is available, according to a new analysis by The Center for Arts Education.

The funding declines reported by schools date back to the 2006-2007 school year, before the onset of the current recession and in a period during which funding for Yonkers public schools actually increased by 12 percent.¹ With a looming \$42 million budget gap for 2011-2012, the Yonkers Public School District is projecting that arts education programming in public middle and high schools will be significantly reduced, which would have an impact on the ability of students to fulfill their graduation requirements and be adequately prepared for college and career.²

The data in this briefing paper was collected for the first time in 2009 by the New York State Education Department as part of the required reporting through the Basic Education Data Survey (BEDS). This briefing paper is one in a series reporting on data from regions across the State of New York.

Our analysis of the BEDS survey data from Yonkers reveals that:

- 77 percent of public schools report that funding for arts instruction is insufficient;
- 42 percent report that funding has decreased over the past three school years;
- Not one of the 38 schools that completed the survey reported "abundant" resources for the arts.

1. Bernard P. Pierorazio, Superintendent of Yonkers Public Schools, "Proposed Budget Presentation 2011-2012 School Year," April 14, 2011, page 5. <http://www.yonkerspublicschools.org/budget/1112/Yonkers-Challenge-041411.pdf>
2. Yonkers Public Schools, "Impact of 2011-2012 Cuts to Public Education." Retrieved from website on June 23, 2011. <http://www.yonkerspublicschools.org/budget/1112/2011-2012-IMPACT-of-Cuts.pdf>

A PERFECT STORM FOR ARTS EDUCATION

While history tells us that during difficult budget times the arts are often the first subject area to be cut from the school day; the declines in funding for arts education in Yonkers public schools appears symptomatic of a larger trend away from the arts that is occurring in many schools statewide and throughout the country.

Sixteen of 38 Yonkers public schools responding, or 42 percent, report arts education funding declines over the three school years for which data is available, and 23 of 30 schools responding, or 77 percent, report insufficient funding for arts education overall.

On first glance this would appear to be a sign of the economic times; however, this has occurred in a period during which overall school budgets in Yonkers have increased by 12 percent, rising to \$487 million for the 2009-2010 school year.

National data reveals that a pronounced narrowing of the school curriculum has taken place since the passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which places disproportionate weight on student achievement measured by state examinations in just two subject areas—Math and English Language Arts. According to a 2007 national study, 44% of districts reported cutting time on science, social studies, art and music, physical education, lunch or recess since the year NCLB was enacted.³

The overemphasis on high-stakes testing, combined with cuts to school and government budgets, is creating a perfect storm threatening arts programming at schools across the country; as budgets continue to decline, the imbalances will likely be exacerbated.

While funding alone does not guarantee that students are receiving a quality education, spending declines in arts education are a bellwether of how the arts are faring in public schools. Reduced funding can compromise the delivery of arts instruction as long-standing partnerships with cultural organizations are terminated, arts supplies are used up and not replaced, and the purchase of musical instruments and technology upgrades for the classroom are put off indefinitely.

According to the Yonkers Public School District due to the current budget crisis, arts education in middle and high schools will be reduced “affecting students’ diploma requirements and college readiness.”⁴

This is especially disturbing as research shows that quality instruction in music, dance, theatre and visual art results in a wide array of social and academic benefits for students, including the ability to keep students in school and on track for graduation.⁵ According to a previous study conducted by The Center for Arts Education of over 200 high schools in New York City, those schools with the highest graduation rates also consistently offered the most robust arts education offerings.⁶ While the graduation rate in Yonkers public schools has increased in recent years, with a graduation rate of 63 percent in 2009, it still lags behind the statewide average of 73 percent.⁷

The city would be remiss to disinvest in arts education as it seeks to maintain and increase the gains that have occurred. Not only does the art-making process enrich student lives and give students something to look forward to at school, the American public by an overwhelming margin believes the arts are vital to a well-rounded education.⁸

3. Among districts that reported a decrease in instructional time for the arts, average decreases in arts and music amounted to a loss of 57 minutes per week.

4. See note 2.

5. Heather J. Clawson and Kathleen Coolbaugh, “National Evaluation of the YouthARTS Development Project.” *Juvenile Justice Bulletin* (May 2001), U.S. Department of Justice, The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

http://www.ncjrs.org/html/ojjdp/2001_5_2/page1.html

6. Douglas Israel, “Staying in School: Arts Education and New York City Graduation Rates,” The Center for Arts Education, 2009. <http://www.caenyc.org/arts-education-report>

7. CBS News New York, “New York High School Graduation Rate Continues To Climb, June 14, 2011.” <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2011/06/14/new-york-high-school-graduation-rate-continues-to-climb/>

8. According to a 2005 Harris poll survey, 93% of Americans agree that the arts are vital to a well-rounded education for children. http://www.americansforthearts.org/news/press/2005/2005_06_13b.asp

NEW YORK STATE INSTRUCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ARTS

As a testament to the value of arts education as part of a well-rounded curriculum, New York has a set of minimum requirements for arts education (music, dance, theater and visual arts) intended to ensure that every school across the state is providing at least a minimum level of arts instruction for every student.⁹ Enshrined in the regulations of the state education commissioner, these instructional requirements have the power and effect of law, and it is the duty of the commissioner to enforce them.

Unfortunately, the state education department has not collected the data to accurately measure whether schools are providing students access to the arts education outlined in the regulations.¹⁰ And there is no mechanism in place to ensure that schools are providing the requisite arts education to students. As funding for arts instruction declines in schools there is a real threat that students will have less and less opportunity to enjoy a robust arts education. It is more important than ever that school leaders and education officials make the commitment to ensure students are receiving the arts education to which they are entitled.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Yonkers school leaders should ensure that arts programs are not disproportionately cut during economic downturns and that every child receives a vibrant and enriching arts education.
- The New York State Education Department should continue the collection of arts education data through the BEDS survey; however, the survey questions should be revised to align with the state instructional requirements for the arts.
- The New York State Education Department should issue a report on compliance with state arts mandates for schools throughout the state and require that districts with schools that are not providing the necessary instruction develop action plans with steps they will take to provide the minimum requirements for arts instruction to every student.

9. New York State Education Department, "Part 100 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education," (Albany: Author, n.d.). <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1002.htm>

10. From the survey data collected by the state education department that informed this briefing, it is not possible to determine compliance with these state requirements.