



THE CENTER FOR ARTS EDUCATION

For Immediate Release

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**NEW REPORT: SCHOOL FUNDING FOR KEY COMPONENTS
OF ARTS EDUCATION HAS FALLEN SHARPLY**

***Double-Digit Percentage Declines for Arts Supplies
and Partnerships with Cultural Organizations***

**Department of Education Claims Policy Shift During Increase in Overall School
Spending— Despite Adverse Effects for Students & Arts Organizations**

Declines Likely Due to End to Dedicated Arts Funding and Focus on Testing

New York, NY - June 30, 2010 – Funding for two critical areas of arts education in New York City public schools— arts supplies and partnerships with arts and cultural organizations— have precipitously decreased since the New York City Department of Education (DOE) ended dedicated per pupil arts funding three years ago, according to a new analysis released today by The Center for Arts Education (CAE).

The report, “Funding for Key Areas of Arts Education Experiencing Sharp Declines – Even Before Anticipated Budget Cuts,” based on analysis of DOE data over the past three school years, shows that:

- Budgeting for basic arts education supplies, including crayons, musical instruments and other equipment, decreased 68%, or \$7.2 million, since the beginning of the 2006-07 school year.
- Funding for city arts and cultural institutions to directly provide arts programs for students has dropped by 31%, or \$6.6 million.
- Concurrently the DOE’s overall expenditures increased by 13%, or \$2.1 billion.

“These declines, quite frankly, began before the current economic crisis took hold. Students lost access to the basic tools of making art and to rich arts and cultural opportunities during a time of general prosperity and growth at the Department of Education,” said Richard Kessler, Executive

Director of CAE. "As schools have been under pressure to focus on raising test scores in math and reading, vital components of arts education have gone on the chopping block."

In the 2007-08 school year, the NYC Department of Education ended *Project ARTS*, which used per pupil dedicated arts funding to incentivize schools to hire additional arts teachers, purchase art supplies, and to enrich in-school programming by partnering with art and cultural vendors. At the same time that schools felt increasing pressure to focus on state math and reading assessments, its principals were no longer required to spend funds originally targeted for arts education solely for that purpose.

When these findings were presented to DOE staff for comment, they said declines in budgeting to educational services provided by the city's rich and varied cultural arts institutions reflected a policy shift to rely less on these institutions and more on school-based staff to provide arts instruction. However, the DOE has not announced a formal policy change and individual principals are making budgeting decisions at the school-level.

Funding decreases for arts supplies and partnerships have been offset, dollar-wise, by increased budgeting for arts education staff. That increase is primarily attributable to salary increases and related costs, not new hires.

There has been a gain of only 139 arts teachers over three years in a system with 1,500 schools. City middle schools have in fact seen a net reduction in arts education staff, despite an 18% increase in personnel funding. Middle schools have also seen the largest reduction in arts supplies and partnerships: a 79% reduction equaling nearly \$2.7 million for supplies, and a 48% decline, or \$2.6 million for cultural partnerships.

"The suggestion of a deliberate policy shift does not explain the sharp decline in funds for the necessary materials to engage in art making. Without the tools that hardworking educators need to provide a well-rounded education, they have no choice but to scale back hands-on learning, unless they dig into their own pockets. And when schools stop bringing New York City's arts and cultural institutions directly to students' fingertips, the quality of arts education also suffers," said Kessler.

Many city elementary schools are simply not able to meet the state education requirements without the support of outside organizations. According to an analysis by the Department of Education, based on data from the 2006-07 school year, only 16% of elementary schools were equipped to offer all four arts disciplines, as required by state education law, through school-based staff alone. However, 38% were able to provide that full range of arts opportunities to their students by partnering with art and cultural organizations.

The decline in funding for schools' arts partnerships has hurt that important sector of the city's economy. "Citywide and community-based cultural organizations are feeling the pinch from the school system's significant cutbacks. And with this year's overall budget looking worse than ever, we are very afraid for the city's cultural fabric," said Kessler.

"Students in elementary and middle schools in the South Bronx and Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, where Battery Dance Company had developed long-term and profoundly effective dance residencies, have been deprived of their dance classes over the past three years since the budget axe fell," said Jonathan Hollander, Artistic & Executive Director of the Battery Dance Company. "When Project ARTS funding was released from the protected status it formerly enjoyed, principals facing shortfalls in their operating budgets were forced to terminate dance

programs in favor of basic office expenses. The current crop of students has felt the loss deeply.”

“It is essential that the DOE create a dedicated funding line with budget allocations for schools to prevent more declines in arts education and capitalize on the benefits of arts education for children,” said Ernest A. Logan, president of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators. “Arts education is invaluable to our children’s academic, emotional and moral development, allows their innate genius to flourish, and often provides them their main incentive to go to school.”

According to New York City Council Member Robert Jackson, Chair of the Education Committee, “As advocates predicted, a framework that emphasizes test scores has resulted in a significant diversion of resources away from arts education. Ultimately, we all lose when students are deprived of the arts. We lose in the sense of failing to convey the hallmarks of civilization and humanity to this generation of students. We lose when we fail to stimulate their imagination and develop their creative potential. But, the real irony is that students with access to arts education have been shown to produce superior academic achievement on standardized tests, the very goal that is being pursued. Arts are part of a sound, basic education. Period.”

“CAE’s report should be treated as an alarm and call to action,” said Pedro A. Noguera, Professor of Education at the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Development and the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education at NYU. “The arts are not frills or fluff that can be cut as soon as budgets get tight. We have ample evidence that many students become motivated to learn and attend school because art and music is offered to them. There is also considerable research that bears witness to the fact that participation in the arts promotes the intellectual and emotional development of children in a variety of ways. New York is an international center for the arts. It would be a crime if the children in its public schools were denied access to arts education because of the fiscal crisis.”

The report’s findings have policy implications. “Simply put, the city’s experiment with removing dedicated funding for arts education has proven ineffective to maintain the level of arts programs and opportunities that New York City students deserve,” said Doug Israel, CAE’s Director of Research and Policy and author of the report. “This data plainly shows that the goal of a quality, well-rounded education that includes music, theater, dance, and visual arts is falling on the DOE’s priority list. We know that parents and students still believe in arts education—and the city should ensure that schools’ investment decisions reflect that.”

The report recommends that the DOE:

1. Return to per pupil categorical arts funding and hold principals accountable for spending dollars targeted for arts education on arts education.
2. Create a more balanced *School Progress Report* that tracks indicators of arts education offerings and participation at city schools, including whether schools are in compliance with instructional requirements for the arts.

The full report can be downloaded at <http://www.caenyc.org/arts-education-declines-nyc>.

About The Center for Arts Education

The Center for Arts Education (CAE) 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 value of arts education and a fundamental part of children’s overall health and well-being. Visit www.caenyc.org to learn more about The Center for Arts Education.

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