

# DAILY NEWS

## RIP THEIR ART OUT

### City Kids lose out as funding for supplies falls by 68% at city schools

#### EXCLUSIVE

BY Meredith Kolodner  
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER  
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It's not a pretty picture.

Spending on arts supplies and visits by cultural institutions has dropped drastically at city schools over the last three years, even as overall education spending has grown, a new report shows.

While education spending increased by about 13% between 2006 and 2009, funding for arts supplies, musical instruments and other equipment fell by 68%, the report by the Center for Arts Education found.

Spending on partnerships with city cultural institutions decreased by 31% - although the system did hire 139 more full-time arts teachers.

By some measures, the result has been a reduction of arts classes. The percentage of high school students taking three or more arts classes dropped to 28% last year from 46% during the 2006 school year, Education Department data show. And only 39% of elementary school students met state arts education mandates.

Arts advocates say the drop is linked to the Education Department's 2007 decision to stop requiring principals to spend a specific amount of their budget on the arts.

"Given the extreme pressure schools are under to raise test scores, and the greater autonomy principals have over school budgets, it is not surprising that we are witnessing a shift away from the arts," the report states.

The Education Department vigorously disputed the report's conclusions, saying more students are getting at least the basic arts requirements. For example, 84% of high schools offered the mandated two semesters of arts to students last year, up from 76% during the 2006 school year, agency data shows.

"We firmly believe that the investment in licensed teachers of arts is where schools should be headed," said Paul King, director of the Education Department's arts program.

The report's author, though, remains concerned about the state of arts next year.

"These declines and this lack of compliance happened during a period of historic school budget growth," said Doug Israel of the Center for Arts Education. "Now we're seeing real cuts. What comes next?"