



THE CENTER FOR ARTS EDUCATION®

## **Statement on the Release of the Fifth *Annual Arts in Schools Report***

By Lori Sherman, Acting Executive Director, The Center for Arts Education

December 13, 2011

---

Yesterday, the city released its fifth *Annual Arts in School Report* that includes comprehensive data related to school-based arts education for the 2010-2011 school year. We commend the Department of Education and the Office of Arts and Special Projects for their work on this report and we recognize the ongoing commitment of the Office and Special Projects to improve the delivery of arts education in New York City public schools.

We are encouraged that the report shows a continued increase in the number of elementary schools that are providing at least the minimum level of arts instruction that is outlined by the New York State Education Department. In 2010-2011, 54 percent of schools are now meeting the requirements of education law, reflecting an increase from 51 percent the previous year. Reporting on the percentage of middle and high schools that are in compliance with the state requirements was not provided.

While we are encouraged by this increase – especially as schools are facing severe budget decreases - the fact that 46 percent of elementary schools are not providing what students are promised in state education law clearly demonstrates there is still much work to be done to ensure all public school students receive equal access to quality instruction in the arts.

We are also encouraged to see that there was a gain in arts teachers last year after the previous year's decline of 165. This is certainly a step in the right direction, yet, still well below the number of arts teachers in the system just two years ago. It is important to note that while there was a net increase of 28 arts teachers last year, the number of arts teachers declined at the elementary and high school level, most notably with 26 less certified arts teachers at high schools. Considering that the city now reports that there are nearly 1700 schools citywide, up from 1500 in 2008-09, an increase in arts teachers is to be expected, but unfortunately does not match the growth in the number of schools.

The deterioration of the national economy has definitely had an impact on city public school's budgets as all public schools were asked to absorb cuts last year. Unfortunately, the arts took a disproportionately large hit again last year. While the amount spent on personnel continues to increase—largely due to the personnel costs of those already on school payroll—the other two areas of school arts budgeting are continuing to spiral downward:

- Budgeting by schools for arts services, such as those to hire arts and cultural partners to deliver arts education instruction and programs, declined 27 percent last year to less than \$13 million citywide.
- Budgeting for arts supplies and instruments has declined by almost 10 percent to just over \$2 million, or less than \$2 on average for every student in the system.

These decreases come on top of steep declines that have occurred since the 2006-07 school year, when the city made the decision to eliminate the dedicated funding line for arts instruction. Amid a worsening economy, without this critical safety net the arts were sure to take a significant hit.

To ensure that all New York City public students receive access to a quality education, with rich curriculum and education opportunities we ask the city to take even greater strides to improve access to quality arts instruction for every one of the city's public schoolchildren. The city should once again commit to a dedicated funding line for arts instruction to ensure equity for all students in all schools, while also increasing their efforts to hold schools accountable for providing the arts instruction that is mandated by state education law.