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U.S. Department of Education

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Letter to Chief State School Officers on Arts Education

October 2, 2024

Dear Chief State School Officers:

In [September 2022](#), President Biden shared a commitment of this Administration to enhance access to the arts and humanities for every child in America. Today, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) continues to take meaningful steps to support equitable access and fulfill the commitment made in the President's Executive Order on Promoting the Arts, the Humanities, and Museum and Library Services. One of the pillars of Secretary Miguel Cardona's [Raise the Bar: Lead the World](#) initiative is access to a comprehensive, rigorous education for all students, and arts education and integration are a core component of that work. Arts education—including dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts—is key to equitable access to a well-rounded education and central to our shared commitment to ensure that every student receives high-quality instruction that prepares them to be active, engaged, and lifelong learners. In my 35 years as an educator, I have learned that the arts are where the heart and soul of many students is most present. I encourage you to consider how you can expand access to the arts in your schools by using Federal, State and local resources to support and enhance equity-focused arts education programs for Pre-K–12 students.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) provides State educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs) the discretion to define a well-rounded education and to determine how best to use Federal, State, and local funds to meet students' holistic needs. For example, an LEA may use Title I, Part A

funds to bolster arts education programs as a strategy to support Title I students in meeting the State's challenging academic standards. Consistent with Title I, Part A, the permissibility of using Title I funds for a particular activity depends on that school's needs assessment and schoolwide or targeted assistance plan.^[1]

Other Federal formula funds can be leveraged to boost arts education as well. An LEA or school may use funds under Title II, Part A of the ESEA to provide professional development to educators on arts-focused concepts and approaches to arts instruction, including embedding arts education into core subject areas. For example, educators may receive professional development on programs and strategies focused on illustrating mathematical concepts through music or aligning theatrical productions with reading/language arts standards. Funds under Title III, Part A of the ESEA may also be used to provide supplemental arts-focused resources specifically developed for English learners.

LEAs that receive more than \$30,000 in Title IV, Part A of the ESEA funds must use part of their funds for activities that support access to a well-rounded education, which may include arts and music programs. A well-rounded education promotes a diverse set of learning experiences to engage students, and Title IV, Part A funds allow SEAs, LEAs, and schools the flexibility to tailor investments based on the needs of their unique student populations. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, authorized in Title IV, Part B of the ESEA, provides funds to SEAs to subgrant to school districts or community-based organizations to support centers that provide additional student learning opportunities through before- and after-school programs and summer school academic and enrichment programs, including arts education programs.

In addition, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), SEAs and LEAs may use Part B funds to provide special education and related services, supplementary aids and services, program modifications, and support for school personnel, for a child with a disability in arts-focused courses, if determined by the individualized education program (IEP) team to be necessary for the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child. Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) funds can also be used to develop arts-related career and technical education programs of study, including, for example, in the arts, audio/video technology, and communications career cluster.

The Department's discretionary grants provide an additional opportunity for funding to support arts education. For example, the Assistance for Arts Education (AAE) discretionary grant program – the largest dedicated funding source to support arts education at the Department, funded at \$36.5 million for fiscal year 2024 – promotes arts education for students through activities such as professional development for arts educators, teachers, and principals; development and dissemination of accessible instructional materials and arts-based educational programming, including online resources, in multiple arts disciplines; and community and national outreach activities that strengthen and expand partnerships among schools, LEAs, communities, or centers for the arts, including national centers for the arts.

In February 2024, the AAE program launched the new [Assistance for Arts Education Center](#), which highlights Federal funding sources to support arts education, disseminates practices implemented by AAE grantees, provides access to other Department resources in support of arts education, and will develop arts education implementation toolkits and arts education topic area resources.

I urge you to continue to explore ways to support arts education programs to promote a well-rounded education for all students. Through the arts, we can support student wellness, improve student engagement, and bolster academic performance.

Sincerely,

/s/

Cindy Marten

Deputy Secretary

U.S. Department of Education

[1] For more information, please refer to: <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2023/11/artsineducltr62013.pdf>.

Office of Communications and Outreach (OCO)

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