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Governmental Funding of K-12 Arts Programs

Elizabeth Abbick
Butler University

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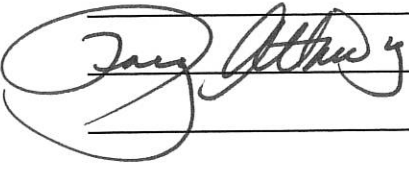
Applicant Elizabeth Rose Abbick
(Name as it is to appear on diploma)

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Governmental Funding of K-12 Arts Programs

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Elizabeth Rose Abbick

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When I was in high school, I took three semesters of a photography class with Ms. Hein. It was a film photography class, so we used chemicals, special paper, and film itself. As I developed more of a relationship with Ms. Hein, she told me about how the school and the district limited the amount of supplies they were able to provide due to financial and budget problems. Ms. Hein confided in me that she was purchasing extra film and light sensitive paper with her own money. Eventually, the class sizes of the high school's photography classes had to be limited.

Why are the arts important? It is hard to measure the benefits of an arts education quantitatively. This is part of the reason why arts programs are still being cut from schools. Math, science, and reading scores seem to be the focus because there is standardized testing and ways to compare students' scores. In addition to this, there are other reasons the arts are being cut, including low levels of advocacy, low school budgets, and the general thought that arts are not a necessity to basic education. Personally, I can attest to many years of arts education -- music, dance, etc. However, mine is just one biased and personal opinion. Some recent research has centered around the economic impact of art--the jobs it creates and how it impacts our economy. Arts also impact academic performance in other subjects. However, there seems to be a disconnect between this fact and the fact that arts organizations' funding being is being reduced, school arts programs are being cut, and advocacy for the arts is low compared to other academic subjects.

Standards for arts education vary among schools, districts, and states. I selected a few specific states to compare because it is important to see the range of standards and funding across the nation. These states are New Jersey, Minnesota (these states have more standards and higher funding), Kansas, and Iowa (these states have lower standards

and funding). As of 2017, some states define arts as a core subject, and some states do not. There is not a national requirement or standard that all states must abide by. For example, the National Center for Education Statistics shows that the states of Minnesota and New Jersey define the arts as a core or academic subject by statute or code, while Kansas and Iowa do not. Most states do have adopted elementary and/or secondary arts education standards, but Iowa falls behind again and does not. Iowa also does not require course credits in the arts for a student to graduate high school. Iowa and Kansas do not provide state funding for an arts education grant program (but Minnesota and New Jersey do).¹ Why is there such a difference between states? This discrepancy could be due to culture, state budgets, or political viewpoints. The fact that there are very few federal standards or mandates for arts education also allow states to use any extra funds they might have for a variety of other programs.

Perhaps policy and standards are not the right way to address these issues. Evaluating arts is inherently subjective, so an objective standardized test may not assess students appropriately in the arts. If arts programs do not meet whatever standard is in place, they risk being cut for the sake of the school meeting standards in other subjects (math, reading, etc.). It is beneficial if the standards are requiring the schools to have art programs in general, but standards also complicate things for arts education.

Some of the questions that I have researched have included: What is arts education? To what extent do students receive arts instruction? Under what conditions do

¹ “Arts Education Policies, by state: 2017,” National Center for Education Statistics, 2017.

students receive this instruction? Arts education in public schools is usually defined as any combination of dance, music, drama or theatre, and visual arts classes, and the federal, state, and local governments usually fund arts education.² However, not all schools or districts provide their students with arts education. This is potentially detrimental to students, as an arts education can provide them with many benefits.

THE BENEFITS OF ARTS EDUCATION

The arts are integral to education. There is research that confirms a positive relationship between arts education and success in the academics for elementary and secondary students. According to Annette Vargas, a theatre professor who has researched arts education, these accomplishments include better performance both in the classroom and on standardized tests, higher graduation rates, more creativity, a bigger emphasis placed on child development, and addressing the needs of at-risk youth. The arts also increase the likelihood of a student receiving a post-secondary education.³

Receiving arts education is important for a child and helps them succeed in other academic subjects while they are still in school. Students who participate in arts education are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement; they are three times more likely to be elected to class office within their schools.⁴ Why do we

² Annette M. Vargas. "Arts Education Funding," *Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership* 2, no. 1 (2017) doi: 10.13014/K26Q1VD8.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Why Students Need Arts Education," ArtsED NJ, 2017.

think this could be? This correlates to the way an art class would challenge a student to think outside the box. The student must be confident and creative. Arts education fosters creativity, which was named one of the Top 5 skills employers prize in the twenty first century.⁵ Arts education affects other subjects, as students who participate in arts education are four times more likely to participate in a math or science fair. They are also three times more likely to win an award for attendance.⁶ This could be because an art class gives the student something to be excited and passionate about, making them want to return day after day. These students are also found to perform community service nearly four times as often as students who do not participate in arts education.⁷ It is almost common knowledge that studying art in any form helps students achieve outside the classroom and in the community. These students are scoring higher on standardized tests and earning higher grades. The best part is that these outcomes happen regardless of the socio-economic status of the student. Arts classes can help “level the field” between students of different socio-economic backgrounds. In fact, arts education has a considerable positive effect on at-risk youth, discouraging delinquency and truancy.⁸ Arts education in schools increases test scores across every subject area, lowers drop-out rates and helps close the achievement gap regardless of socio-economic status.⁹

⁵ “Arts Education Fact Sheet,” National Endowment for the Arts, 2016.

⁶ “Why Students Need Arts Education,” ArtsED NJ, 2017.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

For at-risk youth, young adults who had intensive arts experiences demonstrated higher levels of volunteering and civic engagement than those who did not. According to a National Endowment for the Arts study titled “The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth,” these students of low socio-economic status that engaged with the arts had higher grades than their counterparts of a similar background. They also had higher rates of college enrollment.¹⁰ This is extremely important as adding arts to an education can impact the rest of a student’s life. Arts education helps foster a positive culture in schools; these schools are seeing less disciplinary referrals and in general, more effectiveness of instruction.

Arts education helps students become better readers and writers. One example is how drama helps increase reading readiness in early grades and improves reading comprehension and writing skills throughout middle and high school.¹¹ NEA research shows that art education helps students succeed throughout their academic careers and into the rest of their lives. There are many positive, long-term academic, social, and workforce benefits such as creative thinking, civic engagement, and problem solving. Disadvantaged eighth through twelfth grade students who received arts education were three times more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree than students who lacked those experiences. At risk youth who have access to the arts in or out of school are more likely

¹⁰ James S. Catterall et al. “The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth,” National Endowment for the Arts, 2012.

¹¹“Arts Education Fact Sheet,” National Endowment for the Arts, 2016.

to set higher career goals, have higher STEM scores, and volunteer more.¹² However, even though art education has such a positive impact on our students, the amount of art available in schools is (and has been) dropping. This could be due to budget constraints and lack of policy or standards for arts education.

DECLINES IN ARTS EDUCATION

On April 9, 2010, U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan stated:

in America, we do not reserve arts education for privileged students or the elite. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds, students who are English language learners, and students with disabilities often do not get the enrichment experiences of affluent students anywhere except at school. President Obama recalls that when he was a child ‘you always had an art teacher and a music teacher. Even in the poorest school districts everyone had access to music and other arts.’ Today, sadly, that is no longer the case.¹³

In 2008, the National Endowment for the Arts helped with research to examine the decline in arts education. That year, every 18- to 24- year old, no matter their socioeconomic status when they were a student, was less likely to have had a childhood

¹² James S. Catterall et al. “The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth,” National Endowment for the Arts, 2012.

¹³ Nick Rabkin and E.C. Hedberg, “Arts Education in America: What the Declines Mean for Arts Participation,” National Endowment for the Arts, 2011.

arts education than the 18- to 24- year old's of 1982. It is also important to note that the decline of childhood arts education for African American and Hispanic children were quite considerable – 49 percent for African American and 40 percent for Hispanic children. The most substantial declines were in visual arts, music, and creative writing classes and lessons. Music learning dropped 30 percent, from 53 percent to 37 percent. Visual arts declined from 36 percent to 26 percent, a drop of 28 percent. Creative writing saw a 42 percent fall, from 21 percent to 12 percent.¹⁴ Theater and dance both minimally increased; theater from 12 to 13 percent, and dance from 9.6 to 10.1 percent. However, theater and dance were far less prevalent than music and visual arts in 1982 and despite their increases, remained that way in 2008.¹⁵ From this study, we know that of the children who took music and visual arts classes, more took those classes in school rather than out of school. The same is true of theater and creative writing classes, though on a smaller scale. Therefore, it is probable that declines in music, visual arts, and creative writing reflect decreases in in-school arts education. However, most students who had dance classes took those outside of school. School-based introductions to the arts are becoming less common, and the study also reasonably assumes that some children (mostly those whose parents do not actively support their child's arts education) will be less likely to pursue classes outside of school.

¹⁴ Nick Rabkin and E.C. Hedberg, “Arts Education in America: What the Declines Mean for Arts Participation,” National Endowment for the Arts, 2011.

¹⁵ Ibid.

After the 2008 recession, budget cuts in school throughout the United States were commonplace. Greater than 95 percent of students attended schools with significantly reduced budgets.¹⁶ In some cases, as a short-term solution, art programs were partially or completely removed from the school districts that were affected. In particular, dance and theater classes were cut. During the 1999-2000 school year, 20 percent of schools offered these classes, but during the 2009-2010 school year, only 3 percent had funding for dance and 4 percent taught theater.¹⁷ Even in 2015, schools in major cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Washington, DC were still experiencing the impact of budget cuts, with continued exclusion of arts programs within the affected school districts. Due to these budget issues, fewer schools offered art classes in 2017 than were offered a decade ago.

RESEARCH AND POLICY

CAPP IN MINNESOTA- One Solution to Promoting Arts Education

Some experts think policies like the Comprehensive Arts Planning Program in Minnesota are the most effective way to promote arts education. CAPP is a pioneer and model for arts education in the United States, and its tagline is “all the arts for all the kids.” CAPP is based upon the belief that dance, literary arts, media arts, music, theater,

¹⁶ Annette M. Vargas, “Arts Education Funding,” *Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership* 2 no. 1 (2017) doi: 10.13014/K26Q1VD8.

¹⁷ Annette M. Vargas. “Arts Education Funding,” *Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership* 2, no. 1 (2017) doi: 10.13014/K26Q1VD8.

and visual arts are essential parts of a basic education. The CAPP manual explains that the arts teach skills that are necessary to the development of “whole persons”- thoughtful, open, creative citizens and leaders. CAPP is a resource that looks to give school districts the tools to develop and put into place programs that will bring arts education to all students in a manner that is “developmentally appropriate, sequential, and educationally sound.” CAPP provides training and support to select sites over a two-year period. Improvement to school arts programs are gained by using CAPP’s planning, using the community resources, and a comprehensive curricular approach. CAPP helps Minnesota’s public school districts plan and implement wide-ranging K-12 school arts programs. “Arts” are defined as dance, literary arts, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts. CAPP’s goal is to help local schools design five-year and long-range plans for arts education for all students. CAPP also provides grant money, workshops, resources and materials, and leadership training for the first two years. The first year is focused on providing this leadership training and to help develop the five-year plan. The second year helps implement the first year of this plan. Some areas in which CAPP has helped improve include new or revised curriculum in all arts areas, professional development, more staffing for the arts, allowing students to work with professional artists, new or renovated arts facilities, and special activities such as community education classes in the arts. CAPP is funded by the Minnesota legislature and gives schools and districts a clear plan for enhancing their art programs.¹⁸

¹⁸ “Minnesota Comprehensive Arts Planning Program,” Minnesota Center for Arts Education, 1993.

RAND- Debates and Data

Many of the debates about the arts are not conducive to solving the issues surrounding the arts because there is simply not enough data. There is a lack of a developed body of rigorous and independent research on the arts. However, the RAND Corporation has been building that body of research on the arts in order to aid and inform public policy. RAND is a nonprofit research organization that offers non-biased analysis and solutions that address the challenges which the public and private sectors around the world. During the early 2000s, the RAND Corporation started to build that body of research on the arts to help inform public policy. In several reports on the performing arts, media arts, and the visual arts, RAND researchers have found what is known and what is not known about the ecology of the arts. They have found trends in public involvement, different types of arts organizations and how many there are, different levels and sources of financial support, and the number of artists working in their respective fields and the different employment environments. They have also found what is effective in terms of building participation in the arts and examined the partnerships between arts organizations and schools, specifically in California's Los Angeles School District. They are still researching innovation and ways to boost greater participation locally in the arts. The second chapter of this report talks about the benefits of the arts. They name the benefits to be cognitive, behavioral, health, community/social, and economic. They also touch on the intrinsic benefits of the arts that are mostly taken for granted or not touched in other research. The ultimate recommendation of the report is to

focus on creating more of a demand for the arts. Increasing the supply will not have much effect if there is not participation.¹⁹

Both CAPP and RAND are innovations in research and policy that are critical in the art world. It is important that research on the arts continues, as it is useless to have any debate without data. RAND has been collecting this data so that there would be more conducive discussions about the arts, and these discussions would be based less on opinions and feelings about the arts, especially when it comes to public policy. CAPP is an example of such public policy that is leading the country by a state-wide curriculum-based program for implementing the arts back into schools. Both of these programs could be models for solutions to promoting arts education.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE NEA

The National Endowment for the Arts is a non-profit organization. During full committee consideration in the House, Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY) offered an amendment to boost funding for the NEA per President Obama's request. His interest was to provide more access in more areas across the country for healing art therapy work with veterans. Art Works through the NEA "supports the creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence, and promotes public engagement with diverse and excellent art, lifelong learning in the arts, and the strengthening of communities through the arts." Art Works

¹⁹ Kevin F. McCarthy et al. "Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts," RAND Corporation, 2014.

has two programs that could help with arts education funding for specific projects and activities.

1. Creativity Connects is a grant opportunity. It supports collaborations between arts organizations and other organizations which are not in the arts sector. These organizations include business, education, environmental, faith, financial, food, health, law, science, and technology groups. Selected projects do the following: Demonstrate the value of working with the arts, support the infrastructure for the arts to work in new ways with new sectors, build bridges that create new relationships and constituencies, or create innovative partnership projects to advance common goals.
2. Challenge America offers support to small and mid-sized organizations primarily. These organizations extend the reach of the arts for those who do not experience the arts because of geography, ethnicity, economics, or disability.²⁰

For longer than 50 years, the NEA has provided “strategic leadership and investment in the arts through its core programs for dance, design, folk and traditional arts, literature, local arts agencies, media arts, multidisciplinary arts, music, theater, visual arts, and others.”²¹ Because of the NEA, arts activity has actually increased in areas that were underserved or not served at all previously. This is especially noticeable in rural and inner-city communities.

²⁰ Annette M. Vargas, “Arts Education Funding,” *Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership* 2 no. 1 (2017) doi: 10.13014/K26Q1VD8.

²¹ “National Endowment for the Arts,” Americans for the Arts, 2015.

The NEA is a wonderful example of federal and state partnership. It dispenses 40 percent of its program dollars to state art agencies. Then, each state uses its own appropriated funds to support art programs throughout that state.²² These grants, along with state-specific appropriations, are distributed to strengthen the infrastructure of the arts and to ensure access to the arts.

HOW DOES THE UNITED STATES FUND THE ARTS?

The NEA put out a pamphlet titled “How the United States Funds the Arts” in 2012. This pamphlet helps break down how exactly arts in the United States receive funding. The NEA breaks it down into three categories: Direct public funding (from the NEA, state, regional, and local arts agencies), other public funding-both direct and indirect (from various federal departments and agencies), and private sector contributions (from individuals, foundations, and corporations). For the sake of relevancy and brevity, I will be focusing on the first category, direct public funding, which includes funding from the NEA and state, regional, and local arts agencies. The NEA was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent federal agency and is dedicated to advancing artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of American individuals and communities.²³ In the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, annual funding is considered, specifically in the two subcommittees overseeing the U.S. Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. For reference, in 2012, the agency’s

²² Ibid.

²³ “How the United States Funds the Arts,” National Endowment for the Arts, 2012.

appropriation was \$146 million. Of that amount, 80 percent went toward grantmaking.²⁴ Another way the arts are funded are through state and regional agencies. The NEA and the state and regional arts agencies are partners in funding the arts. In 1965, twenty-three states had official arts agencies or councils. That was the year the NEA was established, and it was required to allocate funds to any state that established an arts agency. So, it was no surprise that within a few years, nearly every state had an arts agency.²⁵ State arts agencies use NEA-provided Partnership Agreement funds together with state-appropriated funds to support initiatives which are determined at the local level. Each state arts agency receiving NEA support is required to develop a statewide plan that proves appropriate use of the state agency grants.

Both federal and state appropriations to the arts have declined since the 2007-2009 economic recession. In 2009 and 2010, the NEA's annual appropriation increased, but then were reduced again in 2011 and 2012 by \$12.8 million and \$8.7 million, respectively.²⁶ In recent years, annual appropriations to state arts agencies have continued to decline. Because of this, several state arts agencies have had to contend with restructuring or elimination. For example, in Fiscal Year 2012, all state funding for the Kansas Arts Commission was eliminated. The next year, a new arts agency, the Creative Arts Industry Commission within the Kansas Department of Commerce, with \$700,000 in funding from the state government, was created. Based on an analysis of data from the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "How the United States Funds the Arts," National Endowment for the Arts, 2012.

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, Minnesota had between \$3.75 to \$6.50 per capita in state arts agency appropriations during that FY 2012. That year, the Kansas Arts Commission received no appropriation, which is why it was eliminated and restructured.²⁷

Finally, funding comes from local arts agencies. These agencies have a range of influence. There are approximately 5,000 local arts agencies currently across the United States that serve cities, towns, counties, and regions.²⁸ They usually function like councils or commissions or city departments. They are funded by various sources like the NEA, state arts agencies, or private donations.

LEGISLATION- NCLB, ESSA, AND TODAY'S TRAJECTORY

Tina Beveridge's article "No Child Left Behind and Fine Arts Classes" helps explain the structure of NCLB and the effects of NCLB on non-tested subjects, specifically music and art. It has forced educators to rethink how to advocate for the arts. No Child Left Behind was signed into law in 2002 and makes art a core subject. However, it does not provide much in terms of assistance or support for arts education. The next year, 2003, arts funds were cut from the act; what was left was only \$30 million for programs that integrated arts into other education curriculum.²⁹ NCLB requires

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Tina Beveridge. "No Child Left Behind and Fine Arts Classes," Arts Education Policy Review 111.1 (2010): 4-7.

testing that proves schools are making “Adequate Yearly Progress.” They do this by testing students in reading, writing, and math. A school’s AYP helps determine the amount of federal funding it receives. If a school does not meet the AYP benchmarks, there are consequences, such as a year of using their own resources to come up with new strategies to help students meet benchmarks-- or eventually losing all funding.³⁰ Some arts educators were concerned by the fact that arts are not tested to determine AYP. The reason for this is that in order to keep funding, the schools must focus on the subjects that are tested for AYP. This results in concentrating less on arts classes, restricting instruction time in these areas, making arts solely extracurricular, or even cutting the programs in full.

Anne Grey also wrote an article centering around No Child Left Behind and its effect on Arts Education. It is titled “No Child Left Behind in Art Education Policy: A Review of Key Recommendations for Arts Language Revisionists,” and gives three sets of recommendations for a possible revision of NCLB and arts policy. Grey repeats the sentiments that schools just do not have the motivation to fund subjects like art that are not tested. She reminds us that after 2007, 71 percent of schools had reduced art instruction time in favor of reading and math. This has created problems in education reaching even beyond those in the arts.³¹ However, there are some that agree that NCLB

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Anne C. Grey. “No Child Left Behind in Art Education Policy: A Review of Key Recommendations for Arts Language Revisions,” *Arts Education Policy Review* 111.1 (2010): 8-15.

is somewhat of a victory, since the arts were designated as a core subject. Doug Herbertt, from the Department of Education, emphasized that “the department is not giving districts permission to disregard the arts as a core subject area under NCLB. To the contrary... the act encourages them to find ways to make arts a priority.”³²

The recession in 2008 caused less money to be spent on education, and in effect, some government education policies including the No Child Left Behind Act placed greater emphasis on core subjects, especially math and reading. The lack of spending also contributed to arts education being less valued and gave arts education less funding.³³ Because of these policies, school districts continued to redirect funding toward the subjects that required standardized tests in order to increase their students’ scores. The law had been in effect since 2002 and was signed by President George W. Bush but was continually revamped and aimed to ensure access to quality education to all students regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status.³⁴ Since the importance was placed on subjects like math and reading, funding for arts programs decreased drastically, especially for classes that required extra materials. One thing kept leading to another, and art education took a hard hit: In some schools, there was an option to take selected art classes after school, but with a volunteer teacher. In other schools, art classes

³² Ibid.

³³ Annette M. Vargas. “Arts Education Funding,” *Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership* 2, no. 1 (2017) doi: 10.13014/K26Q1VD8.

³⁴ Annette M. Vargas. “Arts Education Funding,” *Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership* 2, no. 1 (2017) doi: 10.13014/K26Q1VD8.

were offered with a limited number of seats. And in some cases, arts education was eliminated completely.³⁵

In 2015, the Senate worked on the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Under this new legislation, federal mandates would decrease, and states would have more authority and flexibility than they had had in decades. More importantly, under this federal law, the arts were included as part of a well-rounded education.³⁶

In December 2015, President Obama signed the bill into law. Many education leaders across the country attended the ceremony, including Americans for the Arts President and CEO Robert L. Lynch. He stated, “Arts education leaders across the country are looking for federal leadership, certainty, and support to ensure access to the arts for all students, in school and out of school. Today, we can all take pride in seeing a huge step toward achieving this goal with the Senate’s action. There is hope for an end to the current patchwork of state waivers, and advance policy to enable every child to receive a complete education that includes the arts.”³⁷

The law spans Fiscal Year 2017 through Fiscal Year 2020, introducing a new era of education for Americans with more local control and increased state-level responsibility. There are also new opportunities for arts education, including “dedicated funding for arts education through the ‘Assistance for Arts Education’ grant program;

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Annette M. Vargas. “Arts Education Funding,” *Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership* 2 no. 1 (2017) doi:10.13014/K26Q1VD8.

inclusion of the arts in the ‘well-rounded education’ definition with over a dozen references in the bill ensuring among other things that the arts continue to be eligible for Title I funds – the largest federal funding source to local educational agencies and schools; and the integration of the arts in STEM programs – recognized in the field as ‘STEM to STEAM.’”³⁸

Thus, in 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act replaced NCLB. Americans for the Arts wrote a pamphlet titled “ESSA and Arts Education: 7 Basics to Know” to help the public understand what ESSA means for arts education. The first and most important thing about ESSA is that there is much more control at the state and local level, and less at the federal level. States can set their own goals for what student success means, under the basic federal framework.³⁹ This means that local and state advocacy for the arts is much more important than it was before. The reduced role of the federal government in education reform makes it much more important to demand that states place an emphasis on arts education. NCLB’s Core Academic Subjects (which included the arts) have been replaced with ESSA’s “Well Rounded Education.” This is a list of subjects that are deemed appropriate to a child’s schooling. Of these, music and art are included.⁴⁰ However, it is up to the state to decide which of these or others will be used in their schools. Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants have been added to ESSA,

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ “ESSA and Arts Education: 7 Basics to Know,” Americans for the Arts, 2016.

⁴⁰ “ESSA and Arts Education: 7 Basics to Know,” Americans for the Arts, 2016.

and music and art are eligible uses for these funds.⁴¹ Again, it is important to remember that these decisions are made by the state, since local education agencies apply for these funds. Additionally, ESSA still requires testing in subjects like Math and Reading. So, while there might be more opportunity for an arts education in schools under ESSA than NCLB, each state is different and advocacy at the local level is more important now than ever.

Before ESSA, the Senate had not considered K-12 education legislation on the floor since 2001.⁴² The vote was a significant move. As mentioned before, under this federal law, the arts are included as part of a well-rounded education. The arts are required to have equal billing with reading, math, science, and other subjects. Because of this designation, the arts have received an acknowledgement that they are relevant to a complete education. This also means that arts can be eligible to receive funds from federal education programs.

With the Every Student Succeeds Act, the state education leaders need to work with arts education advocates to make sure that arts are a part of the state's education policies. There are three areas of priority for arts education advocacy from the federal level:

1. Ensuring well-rounded arts provisions in the new ESSA law are fully implemented

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Annette M. Vargas. "Arts Education Funding," *Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership* 2, no. 1 (2017) doi: 10.13014/K26Q1VD8.

2. Supporting funding for the Assistance for Arts Education program at the U.S. Department of Education at \$30 million.
3. Supporting full funding of the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant program at its authorized level of \$1.65 billion.⁴³

Starting in June of 2016, the U.S. Department of Education began the process to implement the new Every Student Succeeds Act. During this same time, all fifty state education agencies started administering under the new law.⁴⁴ The Appropriations Committee advanced a bipartisan bill setting the Fiscal Year 2017 funding levels for different federal agencies, but this included Assistance for Arts Education at the U.S. Department of Education. The bill passed.

In 2017, a new administration entered the White House and there was apprehension and confusion on how ESSA would play out. In the Trump Administration's first budget proposal, he planned to "eliminate the arts, humanities, and library agencies... Trump's new budget [called] for the elimination of the agencies, asserting that the endowments are not 'core federal activities' and that getting rid of the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences will likely not cause 'a significant number' of libraries and museums to close."⁴⁵ If Trump's 2018 budget would have passed, the

⁴³ Annette M. Vargas. "Arts Education Funding," *Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership* 2, no. 1 (2017) doi: 10.13014/K26Q1VD8.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Annette M. Vargas. "Arts Education Funding," *Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership* 2, no. 1 (2017) doi: 10.13014/K26Q1VD8.

National Endowment of the Arts, the National Endowment of the Humanities, and the IMLS would have shut down.

By eliminating these agencies from the budget, they are not *technically* affecting the arts education standards in ESSA (which is still the current education legislation). However, for many school districts and areas of the United States, these art agencies are the only art education resources they have. The elimination of these agencies and resources, in essence, is an elimination of the arts. They help provide the funds and other necessities to regions of need. It was a troubling start for arts education under the new ESSA.

On November 20, 2017, Americans for the Arts President and CEO Robert L. Lynch made a statement in response to the proposed FY 2018 Senate Interior Appropriations bill. This bill did include proposed funding of \$150 million each for the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities:

I am pleased to see the Senate Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations allocate full funding for the nation's federal cultural agencies to continue their important work in awarding grants to cultural organizations and governmental agencies in every U.S. state, territory, and congressional district across the country. This action is in stark contrast to President Trump's call for full termination of these agencies. I thank the strong leadership of the Senate Subcommittee Chairman Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Ranking Member Tom Udall (D-NM), both of whom

were awarded our Congressional Arts Leadership Award in 2017 and 2015, respectively.⁴⁶

However, even though funding was continued during FY 2018, President Trump's proposed FY 2019 budget looks eerily similar in regard to the arts and culture agencies. Robert L. Lynch held that the call for the elimination of the National Endowment for the Arts was "short-sighted" on Monday, February 12, 2018. He went on to say that "the proposed budget ignores the fact that Congress soundly rejected this same attempt last year to terminate the nation's cultural agencies, including the NEA, National Endowment for the Humanities, Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting." The annual appropriation for the NEA is set at \$150 million, but the NEA's investment across the country contributes to the \$730 billion arts and culture industry in America, which equates to about 4.2 percent of the annual GDP.⁴⁷ There are 4.8 million jobs within the nation's arts and culture industry and it profits \$26 billion in trade surplus for the nation.⁴⁸ Mr. Lynch continued, "Despite the President's State of the Union speech proclaiming 'Americans fill the world with art and music,' there seems to be a disconnect on the need to invest in our nation's future support of the arts and arts

⁴⁶ "Americans for the Arts Issues Statement in Response to Proposed Funding of \$150 Million to NEA, NEH," Americans for the Arts. 21 Nov 2017.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "Americans for the Arts Statement on the President's FY2019 Budget Proposal," Americans for the Arts. 12 Feb 2018.

education.”⁴⁹ Truly, the creative economy throughout the United States is powered by federal investment in the arts and desperately needs federal support.

For comparison, the NEA’s budget is 0.004 percent of the entire federal budget. This equates to 47 cents per capita. Additionally, the NEA budget has not been adjusted for inflation. In reality, the NEA budget has actually been losing its share of federal funding. When adjusted for inflation, the NEA’s 1992 budget would be larger than twice the current budget.⁵⁰

It is difficult to understand the desire to end these programs. The NEA has improved access to the arts for all Americans and awarded grants in every Congressional district in every state and U.S. territory for more than 50 years. It has placed art therapists in 12 military hospitals to help soldiers returning home with traumatic brain injuries heal.⁵¹ Congressional appropriators have chosen, on a bi-partisan basis, to reject President Trump’s call to terminate the agency because of programs like these. Instead, they chose to provide ongoing funding. In closing, President and CEO Lynch pleaded,

Americans for the Arts stands ready to fight for the arts on a bipartisan basis with the 95,000 nonprofit arts organizations across the United States, with the hundreds of arts advocates who will come to Washington, DC, on March 13, 2018, for the 31st annual Arts Advocacy Day, the business community, and the hundreds of thousands of arts

⁴⁹ “Americans for the Arts Statement on the President’s FY2019 Budget Proposal,”

Americans for the Arts. 12 Feb 2018.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

advocates that are part of the Arts Action Fund. We work with numerous partners from across the spectrum to make the case for federal funding and the federal role of the agencies in fostering investment, spurring job-related growth, expanding educational opportunities, and providing for the preservation of our heritage.⁵²

IN CLOSING

In many parts of the country, you will find groups or organizations looking to fill the gap by working in schools or providing afterschool and summer programs for arts. There are artists and organizations on the ground trying to address the challenges of making sure every student has access to an arts education. However, there is not a complete solution to meet every one of these needs. We need elected officials to step up. We need policy and change. State education budget cuts have made arts programs in schools the first to go. State leaders need to make sure there is adequate funding for schools to rehire teachers and help integrate arts back into the curriculum. The question continues to remain: What is the government doing about this? More specifically: What is the Department of Education doing to address the issue of arts education funding across the country?

The nonprofit arts and culture community continues to work to fill the gaps left by the loss of a regular arts curriculum in all schools, which is becoming more of a common occurrence. There are so many dedicated groups and organizations working in schools or

⁵² “Americans for the Arts Statement on the President’s FY2019 Budget Proposal,”

providing after school and summer programming. However, artists and community organizations cannot and should not be the only ones defending the value and merit of arts education.

Non-profits, communities, teachers, individuals, and states are beginning to cause a wave of change. The arts are beginning to be considered not as an expendable cost, but a benefit to all students. The recent passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act is a hopeful step, since the arts are now included as part of a well-rounded education. Additionally, arts can be a use for federal education funds. These are all things that can bring the arts back into the classroom.

It is important to remember the undeniable benefit of the arts, especially for students. The embracing of arts education programming can offer success and achievement in other core courses. Further action of implementation of arts education will allow students to access the long-term academic, social, and eventual workforce benefits that the arts can and will provide.

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