



ARTS EDUCATION ALLIANCE

A Collective Vision for Equity in Arts Education



Executive Summary

The **Arts Education Alliance** is a partnership between the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA), the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO), the National Association for Media Arts Education (NAMAE), the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), and the National Art Education Association (NAEA). The Alliance advocates for equitable access to a comprehensive arts education for all students by highlighting the importance of dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts as integral components of a well-rounded education. This unified advocacy effort emphasizes federal policy that supports arts educators, secures funding for high-need schools, and addresses inequities in access and opportunity.

Key Issues and Policy Priorities

1. Federal Role in Education

- Since its inception in 1979, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) has sought to promote educational excellence and equity.
- The most recent version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, have recognized the arts as part of a well-rounded education, enabling federal funding under programs like Title I, Title IV-A, IDEA, and others to support arts education.
- Despite progress, significant disparities persist with students from low-income and urban areas often lacking access to arts education. Only 9% of schools offer instruction in four or more arts disciplines, underscoring the need for increased federal investment.

2. Comprehensive Definition of the Arts

- Federal law lacks a formal definition of the “arts,” leaving states to interpret its meaning inconsistently. Annual survey results of arts educators show federal funding is less frequently used to support dance, media arts, and theatre than music or visual arts.
- Congress could approve legislation to establish a formal definition, ensuring all disciplines are equitably supported.

3. Arts Educator Recruitment and Retention

- Teacher shortages, exacerbated by low pay, burnout, and insufficient support from school and district leaders, are acute in the arts. In 15 states and DC, shortages of arts educators disproportionately affect underserved communities.
- Federal initiatives like the Pay Teachers Act and Supporting the Mental Health of Educators and Staff Act address compensation and well-being, while programs such as the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers for Excellence aim to diversify the educator pipeline.

4. Equitable Student Access to Arts Education

- The National Core Arts Standards provide a framework for quality arts education by outlining what students should know and be able to do in dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts education. However, many schools lack the resources, staffing, and facilities to implement the Standards with fidelity.
- Increased support for programs like Title I, IDEA, and the Assistance for Arts Education Program is critical to ensure all students, including those with disabilities or from diverse cultural backgrounds, receive adaptable and culturally relevant instruction.

Impact and Vision

Arts education fosters creativity, critical thinking, and emotional expression while enriching school climate and increasing student engagement. Beyond academic benefits, arts education empowers students to contribute meaningfully to their communities and navigate the future with innovation and empathy.

Unified Advocacy Effort

The Arts Education Alliance unites dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts educators to advocate for:

- Defining the Arts: Full recognition of dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts disciplines as part of a “well-rounded education” under ESEA.
- Funding the Arts: Securing robust federal funding for preK–12 and higher education arts programs.
- Championing the Arts: Supporting policies and champions advancing equity and access in arts education.

Conclusion

The Arts Education Alliance stands as a unified voice advocating for equitable access to comprehensive arts education. By addressing systemic inequities, promoting federal investment, and championing policies that support educators and students, the Alliance aims to ensure that all young people, regardless of their background, can experience the transformative power of the arts.

With the collaboration of leading organizations representing dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts, this shared agenda advances a vision where the arts are recognized as essential to education and human development. Together, we are committed to fostering creativity, diversity, and opportunity, preparing students to lead meaningful lives and thrive in an ever-changing world.

[Bill List From 119th Congress](#)

