

APPENDIX

Help make school a safer, healthier, and happier place.

TEACHROCK HARMONY STUDENT WELLNESS

Music connects us all! For more than a decade, the Rock and Soul Forever Foundation has published free, standards-aligned curricula on TeachRock.org. Using popular music as a lens for learning, we've partnered with nearly 75,000 educators and hundreds of thousands of students to deliver open educational resources for all subject areas.

In 2023, TeachRock launched the **Harmony Student Wellness Program**, a social emotional learning initiative designed to support middle school students.



The Youth Mental Health Crisis:

Today's schools face challenges that go beyond test scores and attendance. Pandemic-related disruptions to school and family life created a situation that the U.S. surgeon general described as a youth mental health crisis.¹ Teachers and administrators struggle with increasing mental health issues, which can lead to substance use, isolation, and even thoughts of suicide. In a recent CDC study, more than 1 in 3 high school students experienced poor mental health during the pandemic and nearly 50% of students felt persistently sad or hopeless.² Our students deserve more. School can be a powerful venue for support, and studies show that youth who felt more connected to people at their schools had better mental health outcomes.

¹ Ritchel, Matt. "Surgeon General Warns of Youth Mental Health Crisis." New York Times. December 7, 2021.

² Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey. June 2021.

TeachRock's Answer:

The Harmony Student Wellness program uses popular music as a springboard to introduce social and emotional skills.

Harmony employs a research-backed framework identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning and focuses on 5 key competencies: **self-awareness; self-management; relationship skills; responsible decision-making; and social awareness.**

Each day, students spend 15 minutes collectively listening to music, participating in guided conversation circles, and personally reflecting on key themes using an arts-based approach. **Through lessons about artists that students know (Beyonce or Lizzo), and even artists they have yet to explore (Grateful Dead or Muddy Waters), teachers are able to discuss important life skills such as healthy decision making, navigating intense emotions, and cultivating friendships and good citizenship.**



Harmony is endorsed by TeachRock founder Stevie Van Zandt and supported by the TeachRock Artist Council, featuring world-famous musicians like **Erykah Badu, DJ Khaled, Rapsody, Marty Stuart, Sheryl Crow, Margo Price, and Taboo of the Black-Eyed Peas**, many of whom have contributed to Harmony lesson plans already.

Proof Of Concept:

Harmony transforms schools! A school counselor from Stockton, California said, ***“We needed this. We were struggling with the culture of our school and students not understanding each other and not being kind to each other. It’s helping us be more united. As a school counselor I notice the ripple effects, students talking about things they’ve learned or relating to each other. We’re kinder and we’re working together. I’m just really proud and thankful for this.”***

Harmony is evaluated internally, and Drexel University will begin an external evaluation in fall 2024. Our TN pilot school reported that implementation of TeachRock’s Harmony Program resulted in the following:

91%↑ *Increase in Student Engagement*

21%↓ *Drop in School Office Referrals*

20%↓ *Drop in School Suspension Rate*

8%↓ *Drop in Chronic Absenteeism*

Teachers Also Reported:

↑ Improved Student Connections and Collaboration

↑ Enhanced Student-Teacher Communication

↑ Improved School Climate and Culture

↑ Increased Academic Achievement

A Call To Action:

Harmony Student Wellness is deployed in districts across the nation, in California, Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, Nevada, New York and New Jersey. **Many more districts would like to implement the Harmony program, but we need increased capacity to meet their needs.**

When a school **becomes a TeachRock Harmony Partner School**, they receive a year’s supply of **200 daily lessons** with scripted teaching notes, custom slide decks, ongoing professional development for teachers, weekly playlists, and weekly parent/guardian communication tools. In alignment with our mission, **we will always offer the daily lessons and teacher notes free of charge** for schools and districts that cannot afford a comprehensive partnership.

“I am learning so much about myself because of TeachRock. This is the first time I have ever wanted to come to school and be on time and it’s because I don’t want to miss TeachRock.” -Harmony Student, Tennessee

3x

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Before the Joint Committee On the Public Schools, New Jersey Legislature
Friday, June 14, 2024

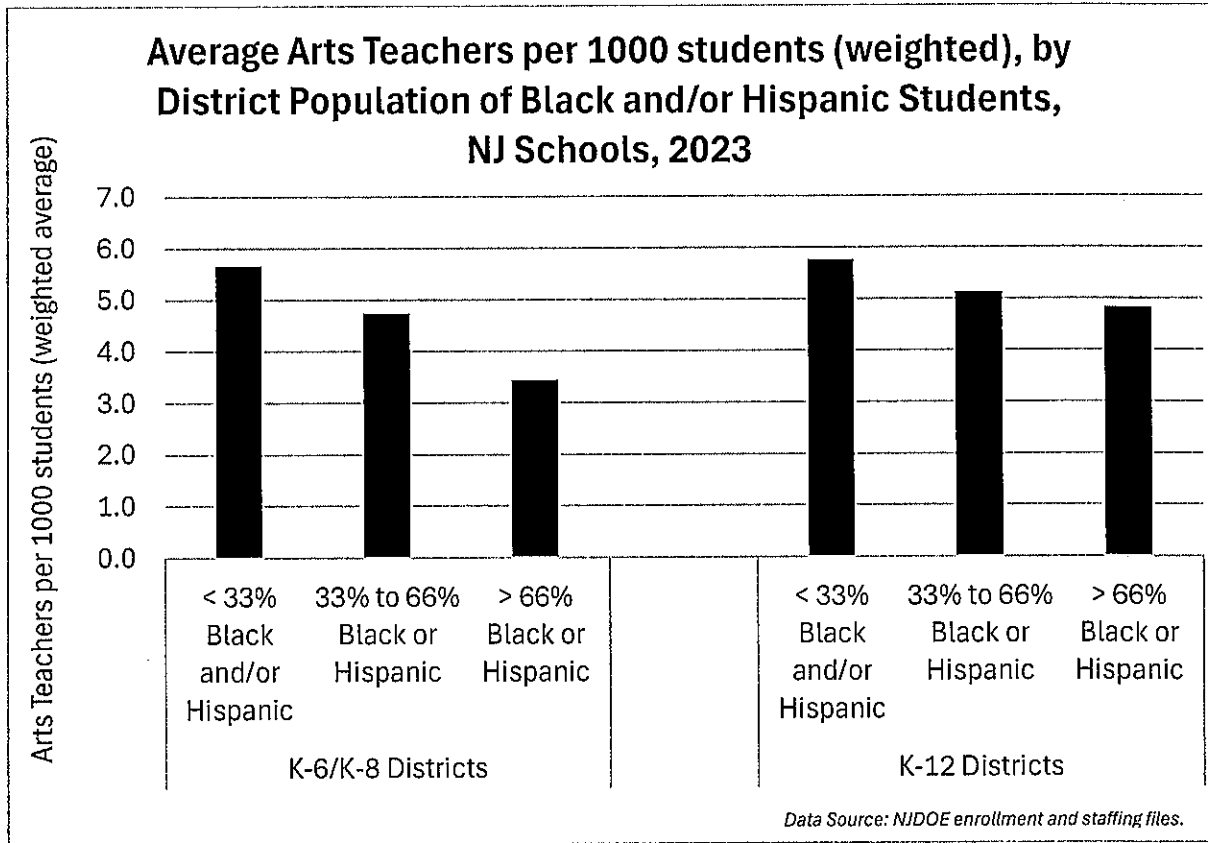
Good morning. Thank you for inviting me to testify today.

A great deal of evidence confirms the value of arts education for students. I leave it to the other panelists this morning to reiterate what we all already know: the arts are good for kids, especially students from disadvantaged communities.¹

What I'd like to discuss instead is the nexus between arts education, funding, and racial and ethnic equity. Unfortunately, access to a broad and rich education, including the visual and performing arts, is not equally available to all students in New Jersey; specifically, Black and Hispanic students are unfairly deprived of the same level of opportunity in the arts that white students enjoy.

As evidence, the following graph uses data from the New Jersey Department of Education to show how the number of arts teachers per 1000 students *decreases* as the percentage of Black and/or Hispanic students *increase*. In K-12 districts, for example, there are 5.8 arts teachers per 1000 pupils in districts where the student population is less than one-third Black or Hispanic. In districts where the population is more than two-thirds Black and/or Hispanic, however, there are only 4.8 arts teachers per 1000 pupils.

¹ Catterall, J. S., Dumais, S. A., & Hampden-Thompson, G. (2012). *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies*. National Endowment for the Arts.
<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Arts-At-Risk-Youth.pdf>

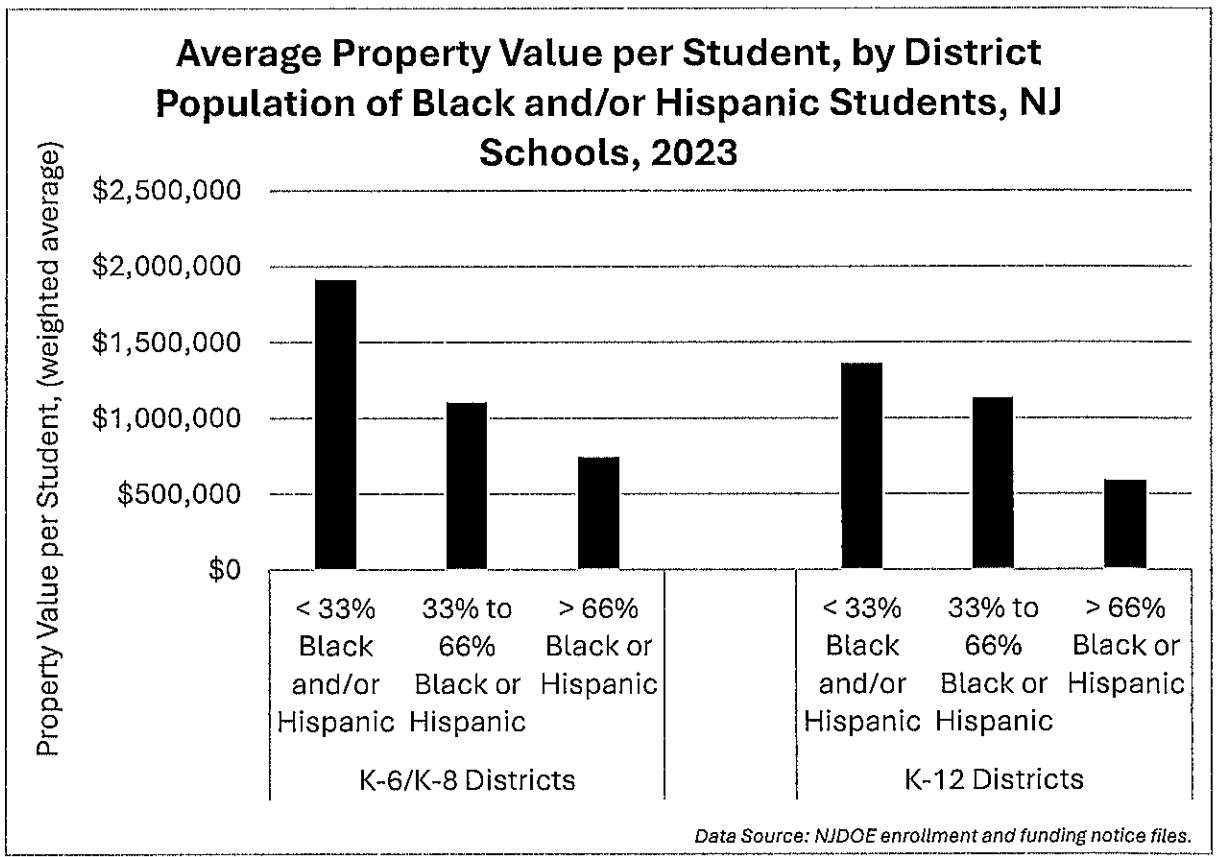


Fewer arts teachers per pupil means less time in arts classes, fewer opportunities to perform or create, and fewer curricular choices in higher grade levels. In other words: In New Jersey, arts education for Black and Hispanic children, on average, isn't as broad or as deep as it is for white children. Why would this be?

The next graph provides an answer: school districts with larger populations of Black and Hispanic children have less capacity to raise revenues for their schools. The property values per pupil in districts with large populations of Black and/or Hispanic students are *less than half* of the values in districts with small populations of students of color.

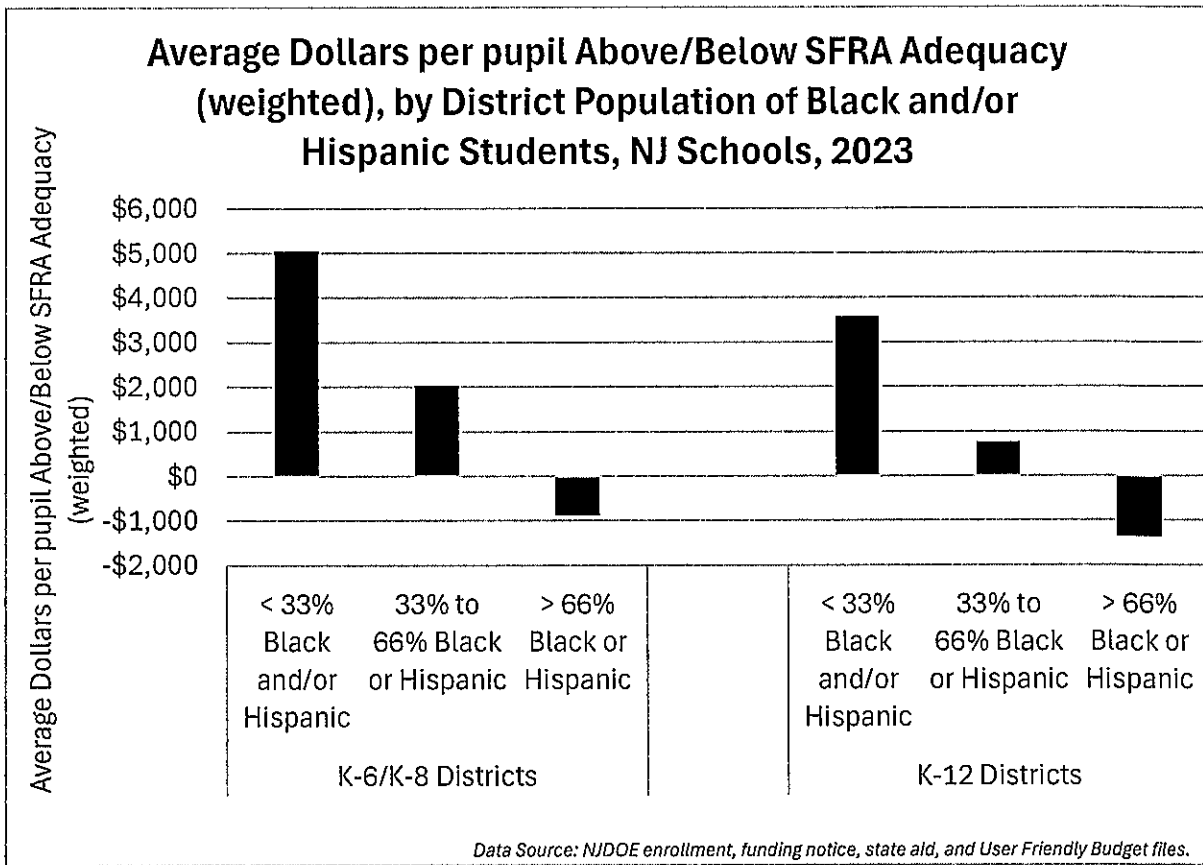
When property values are lower, districts must raise up their tax rates to collect the same amount of revenue as more affluent districts. Districts with large proportions of children of color, therefore, simply do not have the capacity to tax themselves enough to provide the same access to arts education as other districts.

5x



The purpose of state aid to school districts is to ameliorate these disparities. Unfortunately, New Jersey does not go far enough when it comes to providing constitutionally mandated funding adequacy for students of color. As this graph shows, severe funding disparities exist between districts with many students of color and districts with few.

6x



On average, districts with large proportions of Black and/or Hispanic children do not have enough funding to meet the adequacy targets the state’s own law, the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA), says they should have. On the other hand, districts with small proportions of students of color spend way over the SFRA adequacy targets. As we at NJPP have shown in previous work, Black and Hispanic families pay higher effective property tax rates than other families in New Jersey.² And yet their school funding lags; consequently, their students’ opportunities in areas like arts education also lag.

This data is from the 2022-2023 school year. In the FY2025 budget, Governor Murphy’s administration proposed full funding of SFRA.³ This is an important achievement and should be celebrated; however, no one should think this means all New Jersey schoolchildren now have equivalent educations, including opportunities in the arts.

² *Separate and Unequal: Racial and Ethnic Segregation and the Case for School Funding Reparations in New Jersey*. New Jersey Policy Perspective; 9/13/21. <https://www.njpp.org/publications/report/separate-and-unequal-racial-and-ethnic-segregation-and-the-case-for-school-funding-reparations-in-new-jersey/>

³ <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newark/2024/02/27/new-jersey-governor-phil-murphy-plans-full-funding-school-aid-formula/>

The truth is that vast disparities in funding adequacy persist across New Jersey's school districts. As we've documented, this manifests itself in large differences in arts education, access to mental health services, and many other ways.⁴

The school funding disparities that students experience every day are a result, in large part, of the failure to update SFRA. As we have shown in our work, the current funding formula sets adequacy targets that are too low to meet current, more rigorous standards in math and English Language Arts, let alone provide districts with what they need to offer meaningful opportunities in the visual and performing arts.⁵

We must recalibrate the formula's funding targets, as the state constitution demands. Our current disparities in arts education and other curricular areas—disparities that manifest along racial, ethnic, and class lines—are simply not acceptable. I look forward to working with the Legislature and public education stakeholders to solve this problem and provide every child in the Garden State with the education they deserve—including an education in the arts.

Thank you.

⁴ *New Jersey's Black Students Suffer a Decline in Access to School Mental Health Staff*. New Jersey Policy Perspective; 9/7/22. <https://www.njpp.org/publications/report/new-jerseys-black-students-suffer-a-decline-in-access-to-school-mental-health-staff/>

<https://www.njpp.org/publications/report/the-consequences-of-school-underfunding/>

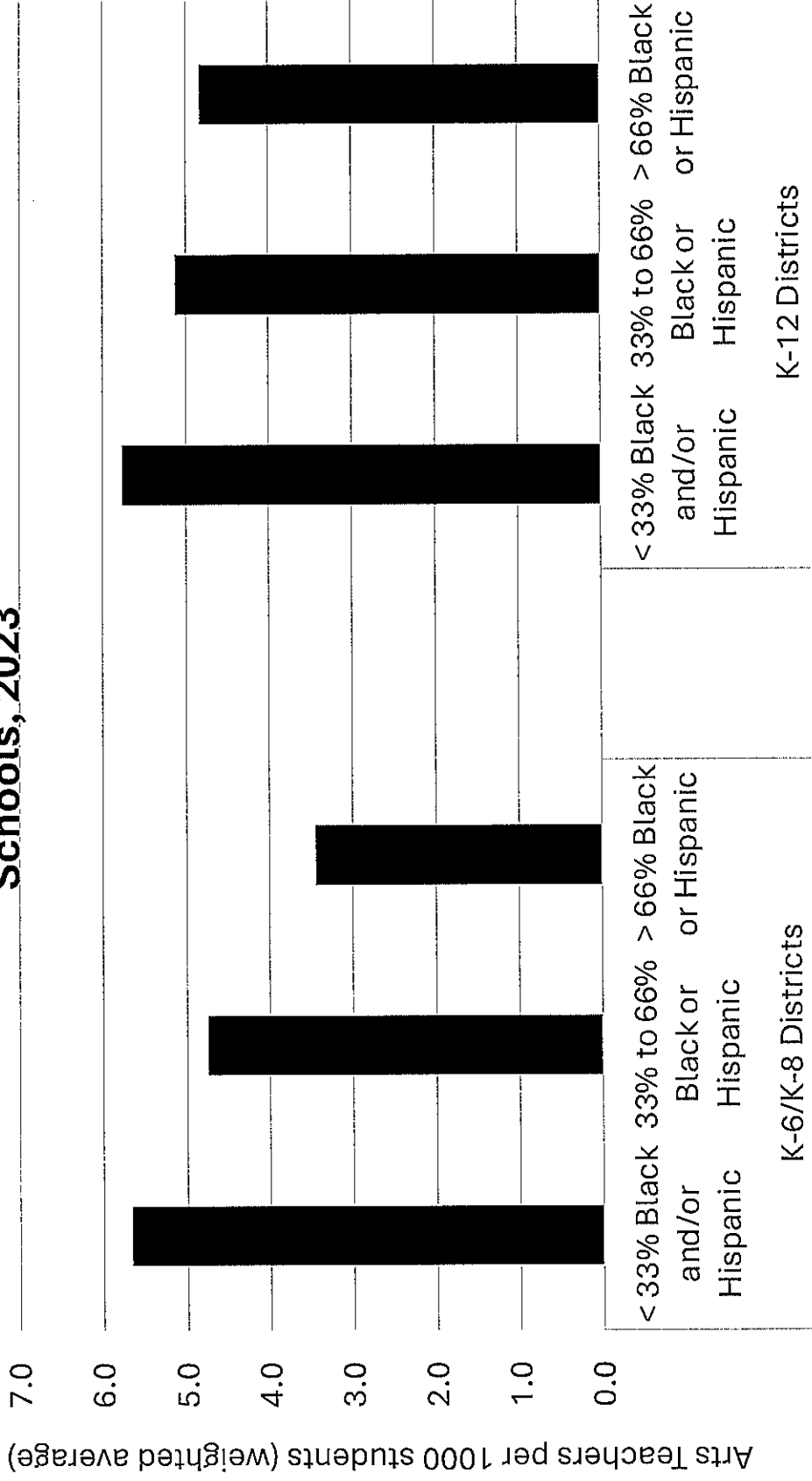
⁵ *Unlocking Academic Success: Revitalizing New Jersey's School Funding Formula for Student Achievement*. New Jersey Policy Perspective; 9/14/23. <https://www.njpp.org/publications/report/unlocking-academic-success-revitalizing-new-jerseys-school-funding-formula-for-student-achievement/>

Arts Education, School Funding, and Racial/Ethnic Equity in New Jersey

Mark Weber, Ph.D.

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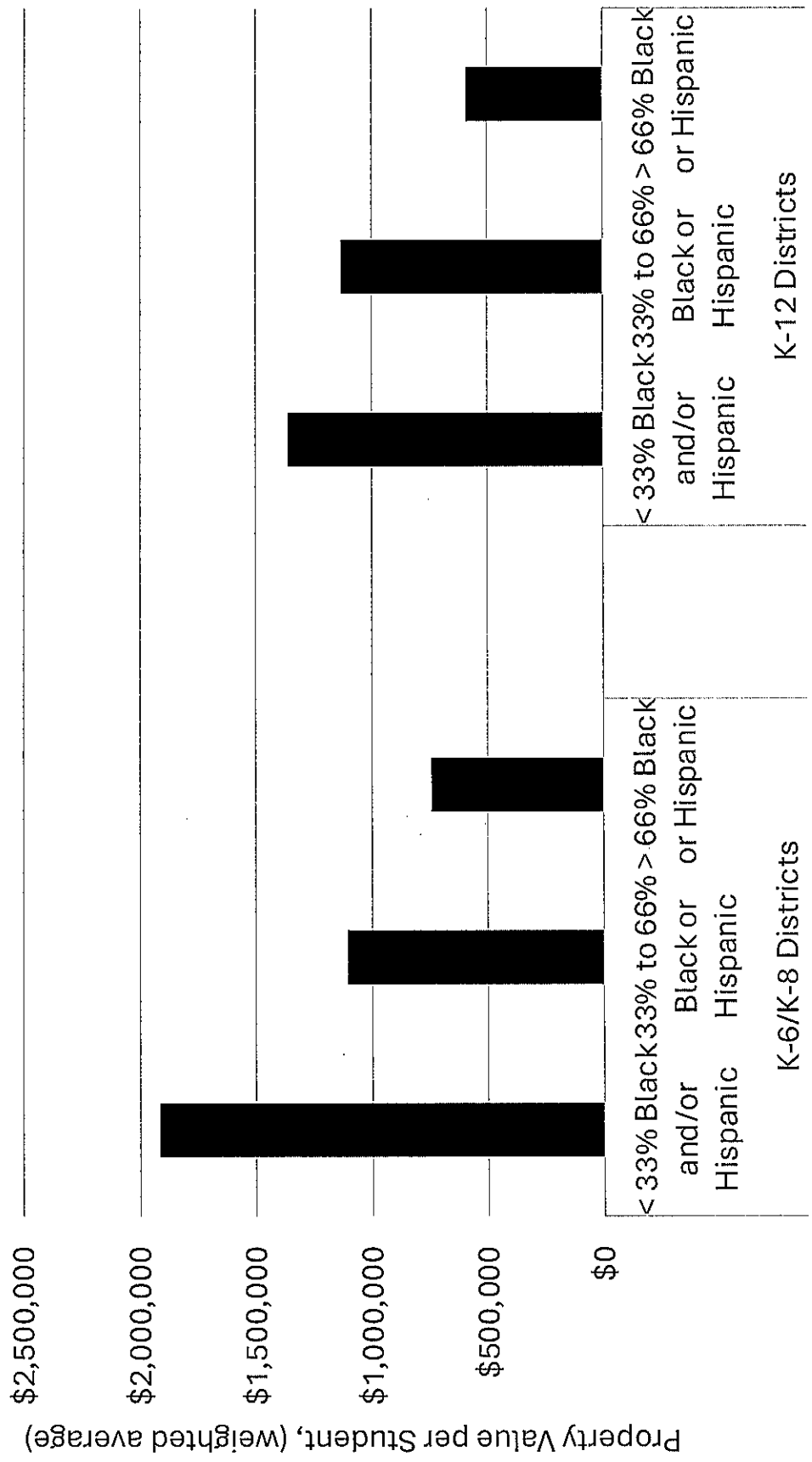
Average Arts Teachers per 1000 students (weighted), by District Population of Black and/or Hispanic Students, NJ Schools, 2023



Data Source: NJDOE enrollment and staffing files.

10x

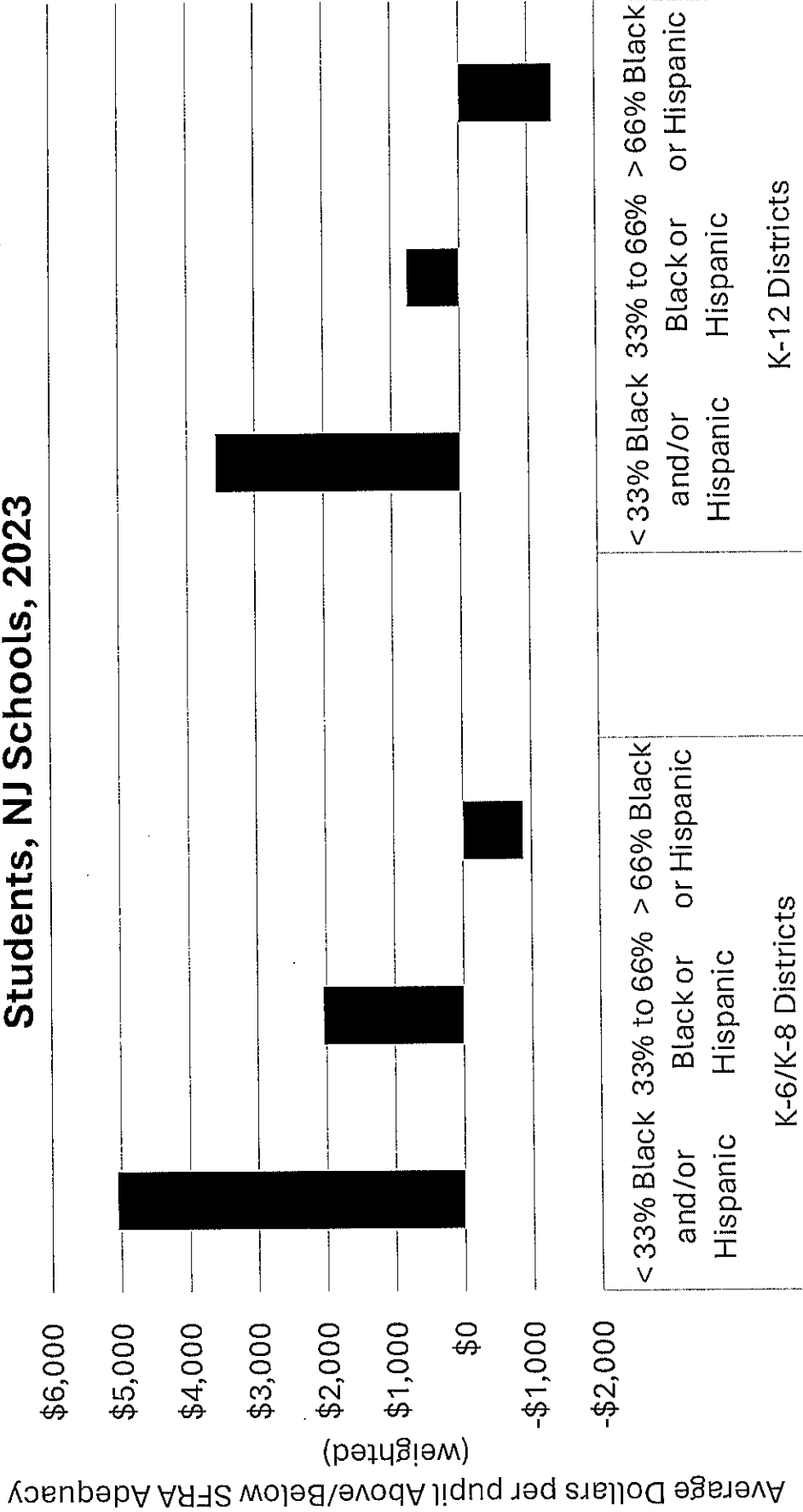
Average Property Value per Student, by District Population of Black and/or Hispanic Students, NJ Schools, 2023



Data Source: NJDOE enrollment and funding notice files.

12x

Average Dollars per pupil Above/Below SFRA Adequacy (weighted), by District Population of Black and/or Hispanic Students, NJ Schools, 2023



Data Source: NJDOE enrollment, funding notice, state aid, and User Friendly Budget files.

Self-Awareness

- *Identifying emotions:* Identifying and labeling one's feelings
- *Recognizing strengths:* Identifying and cultivating one's strengths and positive qualities

Social Awareness

- *Perspective-taking and empathy:* Identifying and understanding the thoughts and feelings of others
- *Appreciating diversity:* Understanding that individual and group differences complement each other and make the world more interesting

Self-Management

- *Managing emotions:* Monitoring and regulating feelings so they aid rather than impede the handling of situations
- *Goal setting:* Establishing and working toward the achievement of short- and long-term pro-social goals

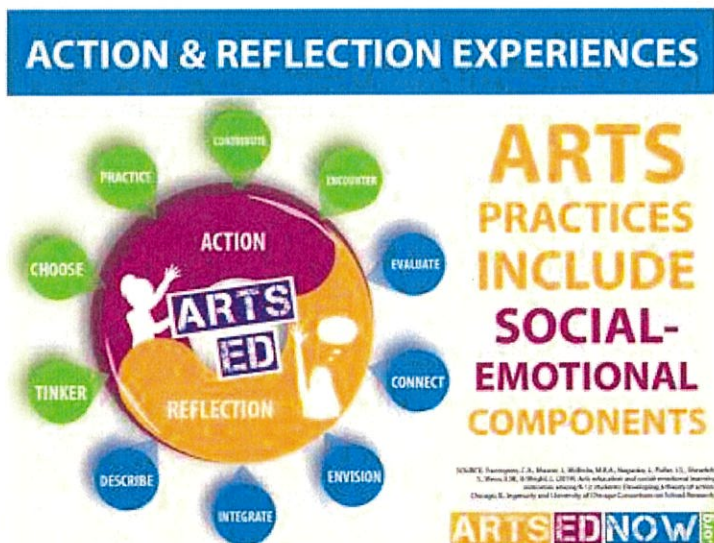
Responsible Decision Making

- *Analyzing situations:* Accurately perceiving situations in which a decision is to be made and assessing factors that might influence one's response
- *Assuming personal responsibility:* Recognizing and understanding one's obligation to engage in ethical, safe, and legal behaviors
- *Respecting others:* Believing that others deserve to be treated with kindness and compassion and feeling motivated to contribute to the common good
- *Problem solving:* Generating, implementing, and evaluating positive and informed solutions to problems

Relationship Skills

- *Communication:* Using verbal and nonverbal skills to express oneself and promote positive and effective exchanges with others
- *Building relationships:* Establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding connections with individuals and groups
- *Negotiation:* Achieving mutually satisfactory resolutions to conflict by addressing the needs of all concerned
- *Refusal:* Effectively conveying and following through with one's decision not to engage in unwanted, unsafe, unethical, or unlawful conduct

Schools have an obligation to prepare students for the tests of life and not just a life of tests, by taking SEL seriously. And that means ensuring systematic opportunities for students to engage in SEL.



It turns out that one of the most important avenues for this to take place is in the visual and performing arts. The reason is obvious. It's hard to imagine students creating, presenting, performing, reviewing, responding to, and communicating about the arts in the absence of empathy, perspective taking, a sophisticated knowledge of emotions, and the emotion regulation, problem solving and relationship skills needed to do the work that artists must do.

14x

As you will see, research supports this intuitive relationship, and further suggests that it's now time to make the implicit connection of SEL and the arts into an explicit connection. New Jersey is poised to be a leader in doing exactly that.

Arts Education & Social and Emotional Learning A recent report from the University of Chicago and Ingenuity entitled *Arts Education and Social-Emotional Learning Outcomes Among K-12 Students* noted that much of this can be understood by considering the framework of how students learn. This document quoted from the report, *Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework*, highlights the following two ways that students learn:

1. The way children and youth develop competencies, beliefs, and behaviors is through developmental experiences—opportunities to act in the world and reflect on their experiences, and;
2. Experiences are most influential in shaping the course of development when they take place within the context of strong, supportive, and sustained developmental relationships with important adults and peers.

Developmental relationships and developmental experiences form the bedrock of SEL for our students. The key is whether or not these experiences are positive ones!

The report further notes the developmental experiences that play a key role in education:

Researchers identified 10 developmental experiences that were particularly powerful contributors to youth learning and development, including the development of social-emotional competencies. These 10 developmental experiences include five action experiences (encountering, tinkering, choosing, practicing, and contributing) and five reflection experiences (describing, evaluating, connecting, envisioning, and integrating). Evidence from a range of disciplines suggests that the more students have the opportunities to engage in these types of experiences, the more developmentally healthy and successful they will be.

As a school board member—can you think of how school-based arts education creates these five action experiences and five reflection experiences? If you are like most people, you can relate to some of them.

This makes complete sense. This is because the arts are social: just look at our arts classrooms to see on full display the social interactions between students and the decisions each student makes in the course of being a part of a group. The arts, by their very nature, are also emotional. It is difficult to look at a work of art or hear a piece of music without feeling something.

Knowing these are important experiences to the developmental process—what can your school district do to make these experiences more meaningful and available to all students? By taking an intentional approach to maximize these educational experiences, school administrators and arts educators will increase educational impact through these interactions with students.

Making Intentional Connections How do we best address SEL in our schools?

We need to look no further than the report “*A Nation at Hope*” from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development convened by the Aspen Institute. The report presented a series of recommendations, including:

Change instruction to teach students social, emotional, and cognitive skills; embed these skills in academics and school-wide practices.

This is key. For SEL to be *effective*, it must be taught *and* embedded in the curriculum.

How do we intentionally embed SEL to the work in our arts classrooms to make meaningful connections? With the *Arts Education & Social and Emotional Learning Framework*.

The *Arts Education & Social and Emotional Learning Framework* was designed by a team of experts (co-chaired by the authors of this article) in the areas of SEL and arts education with members drawn from [SEL4NJ](#) and [Arts Ed NJ](#). This team explored all of the intersections between SEL and arts education through the lens of the arts standards. This approach maintained the focus on the primary goal of teaching the arts while making a clear connection to SEL to inform the instructional approach. This allowed the team to illuminate the inherent nature of SEL within arts education and examine how this can be activated in students intentionally.

This task force combined the just released [New Jersey Student Learning Standards \(NJSLS\) in the Visual and Performing Arts](#) and the *Social and Emotional Learning Competencies* adopted by the [New Jersey Department of Education](#) in 2017.

The new NJSLS in the arts are based on the National Core Arts Standards, which is organized around the artistic processes—the cognitive and physical actions by which arts learning and making are realized. The arts standards are based on the artistic

processes of:

- Creating;
- Performing/Producing/Presenting;
- Responding; and
- Connecting.

Each of the arts disciplines (dance, music, theatre, visual art and media arts) incorporates all of these processes in some manner. These processes define and organize the link between the art, the learner and the audience.

The task force worked to connect the artistic processes to the SEL competencies of:

- Self: Self-Awareness and Self-Management
- Social: Social Awareness and Relationship Skills
- Responsible Decision-Making

Understanding how the artistic processes intersect with the SEL competencies will enable administrators and arts educators to intentionally activate and maximize these connections for the benefit of students.

This crosswalk or “matrix” approach to revealing the intersections between arts education and SEL served two primary goals:

- Empowering arts educators with the information they need to revise curricula and instruction to embed the activation of the SEL components into practice.
- Providing arts educators, administrators, and other decision-makers with the information needed to elevate the understanding of how arts education is a valuable tool to support the implementation of SEL strategies in a school or district.

The results of this 18-month process can be accessed on the [website](#), which every arts educator and school administrator in the state can now utilize as a resource to embed SEL into instructional practices.

As New Jersey moved towards the implementation of the newly adopted Student Learning Standards in the Visual and Performing Arts Standards, the *Arts Education & Social and Emotional Learning Framework* becomes a critical resource. Districts across New Jersey are required by law to revise their own curricula to come into alignment with these new arts standards and be approved by the individual boards of education by September 2021. By encouraging your own district to embrace this approach, our schools and districts will accelerate the incorporation of SEL into the curriculum during the revision process in a way that underscores the inherent nature of SEL within the arts.

By connecting the new arts learning standards to the SEL competencies, along with examples of effective strategies, New Jersey arts educators and administrators will have a road map they may use to aid in the SEL integration process and our students, schools, and communities will be the better for it. Opportunities to develop literacy and fluency in the arts have always been an important dimension of education, but now more than ever these opportunities are essential to the well-being of our students.

We both believe everyone will soon come to realize that our arts educators are the secret weapon to the successful implementation of social-emotional learning in our schools for all students and that arts education is the super power to once again connect all of our students to our schools and provide a pathway to express themselves in this mid-COVID-19 world we reside in.

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