

APPENDIX



Proposed Budget Resolution: New Jersey Arts Education Impact Model Submitted by Arts Ed NJ

Executive Summary

Arts Ed NJ, in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Education and Quadrant Research, seeks a budget resolution to launch a statewide **Arts Education High Impact Model School Program**—a bold, research-driven initiative that will equip school districts with the **data, tools, and strategic support** needed to deliver **high-quality, equitable arts education** to all students.

This initiative will integrate two decades of data with new research tools to assess the state of arts education in New Jersey, identify where it is thriving or at risk, and help districts create high-impact, locally tailored improvement plans. While this tool is for every school and district, a special focus will be placed on students with IEPs, multilingual learners, and under-resourced schools and districts not currently meeting state requirements.

Why This Matters Now

The 2025–26 Census and High Impact Project arrives at a critical moment. The last Census (2020–21) was conducted amid pandemic disruptions, with just 10% of NJ schools fully in person. That dataset serves as a vital baseline for assessing post-COVID recovery in arts enrollment, certified staffing, instructional time, and resource equity.

Additionally, recent anecdotal and survey evidence suggests troubling trends due to potential shifts in Federal education policy and funding that threaten to reverse recent progress including:

- Cuts to certified arts educators,
- Shrinking supplies budgets
- Difficulty hiring replacement teachers due to teacher shortage; and
- Narrowing of the arts education curriculum.

This High-Impact data collection effort will reveal where we're holding ground, where we're slipping, and what interventions are necessary to sustain high-impact, equitable, culturally responsive, and healing-centered arts education for all NJ students.

The state has an opportunity—right now—to lead the nation in arts education access, quality, and innovation.

What the Project Will Do:

This first of its kind project will combine highly respected research protocols with some key innovations that promise to become another arts education model for the nation. The program will provide:

- **Student-Level Data Analysis** (in progress via OPRA): For the first time, we will be able to link de-identified arts participation data to chronic absenteeism, academic growth, graduation rates, and social-emotional indicators.
- **Media Arts Access Tracking:** New research into a discipline added to state standards but never assessed.
- **Impact-Focused Partnership Evaluation:** Go beyond presence to measure the *effectiveness* of community partnerships and how they supplement, not supplant the work of a certified arts educator.
- **Statewide Recognition Program:** Highlight exemplary districts and establish a replicable quality model for others to follow.

Phase 1 (2025–2026): Build the Arts Education Impact Model

- **Develop shared metrics and rubrics** for a “High-Impact Arts Education” school/district model based on 20+ years of NJ-specific data.
- **Integrate and modernize** the NJ Arts Education Census and the Interactive Data Dashboard into a unified, public-facing tool that guides local decision-making and state-level support..
- **Indepth Assessment of areas not measured by the State**, including:
 - Media Arts (a fifth arts discipline newly added in 2020 standards)
 - Student-to-teacher ratios
 - Instructional time
 - Per-pupil arts spending
 - Arts facilities and learning spaces
 - Access for special education students and Multi-lingual learners
 - Professional Learning for educators
 - Field trip participation and community partnerships
 - Sequential arts across grade bands
 - Strategic planning at the district level
 - Community partnerships
- **Train school leaders** and provide strategic planning tools aligned with state standards and local needs.
- **Create “roadmap” toolkits and case studies** to share and scale effective practices.

Phase 2 (2027–2028) Pilot District Program:

- **Support 5 diverse school districts** (urban, suburban, rural) in using the model to develop strategic arts education plans.
- **Provide targeted mini-grants** to improve programming based on identified needs.
- **Implement statewide public awareness campaigns** on the value of arts education and success stories from pilot sites.
- **Expand regional networks** to encourage peer learning and professional development.

This Commitment will Achieve:

- **Strategic alignment** across districts, funders, state agencies, and partners
- **Informed decision-making** grounded in NJ-specific arts education data
Equity-driven improvement for students often left out of creative learning
- **A roadmap for the next generation** of creative leaders, educators, and schools
- **Future policy opportunities**

Appendix:

About Arts Ed NJ

Arts Ed NJ is a collective impact coalition of statewide partners that works to ensure that all New Jersey Prek-12 public school students participate in a high quality, sequential, equitable arts education that celebrates diverse lived experience and artistic expression and prepares the creative leaders of tomorrow.

Having recently completed a new five-year strategic vision plan, Arts Ed NJ is now ready to implement one of the key priorities of the plan. For more than 20 years, we have worked with state agencies, educators, parents, and advocates to expand access to high-quality, sequential arts education. Our work has earned national recognition, and our tools—such as the NJ Arts Education Census and Data Dashboard—are considered best-in-class.

Links to Prior Census Reports:

- [2021: The Resilience of Arts Ed Now: Beyond the Pandemic](#)
- [2017: ARTS ED NOW: Every Child, Every School](#)
- [2012: Keeping the Promise: Arts Education For Every Child: The Distance Traveled – The Journey Remaining](#)
- [2007: Within Our Power: The Progress, Plight and Promise of Arts Education For Every Child](#)



Good morning, Senator Cryan, Assemblywoman Reynolds-Jackson and members of the Joint Committee. I am Mary Reece, the Director of Special Project at NJPSA. I, too, am glad to return to this committee to discuss arts education in NJ – a subject about which I’m very passionate. To that end, I serve as a current and founding board member of Arts Ed NJ, a strong partner of NJPSA.

At NJPSA, I have the pleasure of serving as the liaison to the Multilingual Learners Leadership Committee and as a member of the Special Education Committee. Both groups have hundreds of members – primarily supervisors and directors – who meet regularly. In both settings, the value of arts education to both vulnerable populations has been discussed.

We know how important integrating the arts with other content areas is for those who are learning to speak English. Including visual art, music, dance, and theater in daily instruction assists our multilingual learners to better strengthen their communication skills in their new language. The arts are a natural way to celebrate and learn about different cultures. They also give students the opportunity to express ideas, feelings, and experiences in creative ways. Incorporating arts education is a benefit to ALL students, not just multilingual learners. An environment in which students are given multiple means for expression leads to deeper, richer learning experiences for everyone.

And the same is very true for students with disabilities. For many years at NJPSA, I have conducted an Arts Integration Leadership Institute in Princeton for teams of school leaders and teachers. The Institute is like a retreat for those who attend – usually around 175 excited, passionate educators. Each team creates a plan of action for the upcoming school year which is implemented with the support of a trained coach. I vividly recall the outcomes of a school in south Jersey – they integrated the arts into their special education classes that focused on students with severe communication difficulties. Almost miraculously, students who had never spoken previously were excited to share, IN WORDS, their drawings with their teacher and classmates! It was a very special moment!

That type of experience is what we want for every child who has an IEP. The arts are truly magical and miraculous! And, yet we sometimes hear that scheduling all the services that are included in a student’s IEP may preclude participation in the arts. To assist families, school leaders, and members of child study teams, we propose the development of a guidebook with necessary information to find solutions and scheduling recommendations so that all students will have the opportunity to participate in any arts classes that are offered in the school. Arts Ed NJ will partner with NJPSA and All In for Inclusive Education to create the guidebook. At NJPSA, we had created a similar guidebook that supports the needs of multilingual learners who have IEPs. It’s an invaluable document for educators and families.

We will also include helpful strategies for teachers of the arts and paraprofessional aides. NJPSA teamed with Arts Ed NJ during this school year to offer a series of professional learning workshops for teachers of the arts to learn new strategies and tools for working with students with disabilities. We learned it’s just great teaching!

I look forward to continuing our collaboration with all of you on the development of these exciting initiatives. Thank you for your time!

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