

2015 Arts Committee Report to the PEP

Introduction

2015 was a watershed year for arts education in the NYC public schools. Mayor Bill de Blasio and Chancellor Carmen Fariña made the arts a serious priority. The Chancellor promoted the arts' importance at every opportunity. Significantly, Mayor de Blasio allocated \$23 million in new funding toward arts initiatives that would revitalize arts opportunities for children throughout the City. This meaningful reinvestment in arts education brought the City closer to its vision of providing every child with a balanced education that includes the arts.

This catalytic effort touched nearly every school in the system. It increased arts instruction for students; gave arts specialists the professional development and materials they needed to do their jobs effectively; increased partnerships with the NYC arts community; revitalized arts spaces within schools; and brought families into schools for arts programming.

Immediately the arts were relevant again. Principals around the City, suddenly encouraged to do more in the arts, found the resources to do just that. In a profile of the Chancellor, Crain's wrote that she, "... changed the culture of the nation's largest school system. Tension and competitiveness are out; support and collaboration are in. ... higher morale – which observers say is palpable in the city's 1,837 schools – and the sharing of good practices will lift the performance of teacher and administrators, and thus students".

Nowhere was this more evident than in the arts.

What was accomplished

The following programs and initiatives were all launched or expanded during the 2015 school year:

Type of Support	Program	Description
Direct School Support	<i>Middle and High School Arts Matters</i> -75 participating schools -1,500 participating students -56 participating teachers	Shared teacher personnel for low arts middle and high schools
	<i>Facilities Improvement/Resources</i> -341 participating schools	-Space improvement and development for arts spaces/Priority to campus and shared sites -Music instrument repair and distribution
	<i>Support for Screened Middle and High School programs in the Arts</i> -29 participating schools -31,318 participating students	Offset school costs associated with auditions for screened arts programs
	<i>Borough Art Fairs</i> -550 participating schools -3,400 participants	Year-end fairs in each borough in conjunction with Borough Arts Directors and Borough Presidents

Arts Teacher Supports	<i>Arts Teacher Studio Funding</i> -1,248 participating schools -2,873 participating teachers	Funding directly to support teachers of the arts for materials and supplies
	<i>Arts Studio/Classroom Libraries</i>	Shared resources by art form in each school
Direct Student Programs	<i>Teen Thursday</i> -24 participating schools -360 participating students -24 arts partners	Project based learning activities for 7-8 graders in museum and performing arts
	<i>Middle School Summer Arts Boot Camp</i> -59 participating schools -90 participating students -6 arts partners	Audition preparation for Middle School students who want to audition for screened arts high schools
	<i>Summer Arts Institute for Advanced Students of the Arts</i> -133 participating schools -345 participating students -5 arts partners	
	<i>Broadway Junior-Middle school theater program expansion</i> -44 participating schools -1,447 participating students -147 participating teachers -7 arts partners	
	<i>Salute to Music and All-City Music program expansion</i> -171 participating schools -781 participating students -3 arts partners	Serving Middle and High School musicians with Saturday program and concert opportunities
Partner Programs	<i>Arts Continuum Program</i> -44 participating schools -15 arts partners -4,536 students served	Partnering Middle Schools and feeder elementary schools to bridge the gap and to begin to address articulation of arts learning from elementary to neighborhood middle schools. (RFP process in early October)
	<i>Arts for All: ELL/SWD Partner Project</i> -226 applications received -76 schools (34% of applicants) funded to participate -31 parts partners -17,737 participating students	Arts/arts education organization with a strong track record and curriculum to address the particular arts education needs of ELL or Special Needs students partnering with 25 Schools in new programs. (RFP process in early November)

	<i>Arts and Cultural Services Fair</i> -80 participating schools -109 school representatives -82 arts partners	Annual Fair to bring together arts partners and school leaders to assure strong and appropriate arts partnerships
	<i>Arts Leadership Events</i> -387 participating schools -616 participating leaders -4 arts partners	Four Events for parent coordinators, assistant principals and school leaders Arts Leadership events for school leaders
Curriculum Resources	<i>Arts Blueprints @ 10</i>	Revision of school resource document with appendices for Common Core, ELLS and SWD, PreK, Assessment, technology and curriculum mapping for arts teacher
	<i>American Voices Units</i>	Theater and Social Studies Resources for High Schools
	<i>Arts Website support</i>	Resources and materials online
Professional Development	<i>Arts Education Liaison PD series</i> -610 participating schools -760 participating liaisons -7 arts partners	Training and technical support series for school based arts-education liaisons
	<i>Classroom teacher arts PD</i>	Arts and Common Core borough based arts professional learning
Parent Programs	<i>Parent and Arts Partner grants</i> -26 schools -16 arts partners -3,482 students impacted	Pilot for Parent Engagement with arts partners in school sites
Pre-K Support	<i>Arts and Pre-K training</i> -245 participating schools -581 participating teachers -4 arts partners	Professional learning to assure student-centered and imaginative arts practices in Pre-K arts for CBOs
Arts Field Support	<i>Direct field support for the Arts</i> (to be expanded for <u>seven</u> borough arts directors in 2016)	Five Borough Directors of the Arts to provide principal support, school visits, professional learning and monitoring of arts programs
Teacher Certification in the Arts	<i>Lincoln Center Scholars</i> -12 participating schools -16 participating teachers -4 arts partners	In conjunction with Lincoln Center and Hunter College, providing additional arts certification for up to 20 veteran teaching artists for mid-year placement (January 2015)

What role can the arts play in advancing the DOE educational agenda?

The Chancellor has identified two areas of focus for her administration: the expansion of pre-k education for every four-year-old in the City, and the upgrading of middle school education. Over the past year, new and expanded initiatives have proven that the arts can have a major impact on teaching and learning – and school culture – on both the pre-k and the middle school levels.

1. Pre-K Education

- a. **Expansion of professional development in the arts for pre-K teachers:** In 2015, training in the arts was provided for 581 pre-K teachers in 245 schools serving approximately 7,550 students. In 2016, the number of pre-K schools will expand to 800. We know that learning in the arts gives these young children the age appropriate skills they need to succeed. In Music, training focused on linking music skills to the pre-K curriculum. In Visual Arts, teaching artists modeled methods to inspire children's imaginations and encourage an experimental approach to investigating the world. In Dance, they concentrated on full-body, age appropriate exploration of movement and connections to young children's real life experiences. In Theatre, teachers were introduced to storytelling, puppetry and clowning as techniques for engaging early learners. For nearly all of the participating teachers, this was a first introduction to the arts in the classroom. They not only learned invaluable skills that could be passed on to their students, they also came to realize the benefit of creative play in the life of pre-K children. This training was voluntary and reached capacity, although it provided training for only a small fraction of the teachers and schools engaged in the City-wide pre-K program. It needs to be expanded to ensure a balanced curriculum for *all* students.
 - b. **Arts instruction needs to be deeply embedded in pre-K education** in order to create developmentally appropriate and creative settings to nurture student growth and exploration.
 - c. **Parent involvement in arts training:** Opportunities must be provided for parents to both see their children engaged in arts learning and to engage in those activities with them. By involving parents of the City's youngest students in the arts process, we are not only spreading the word as to the value of arts instruction, we are also creating a large cadre of arts advocates who will want to see their children continue to have arts instruction at every level of their education.
2. **Arts in the Middle School:** These are the years that students get "lost." It is imperative that we provide them with middle school programs that both challenge them and make them feel successful, empowered and engaged. The arts can do that – but first we must ensure that every middle school student has arts instruction in their school.
- a. **Compliance with state requirements:** The state requires that students in the 6th grade should receive 93 hours of instruction annually, equally allocated among dance, music, theatre and visual arts. In grades 7 and 8, and by the end of grade 8, students should receive one semester (55 hours of instruction) in dance, music, theatre, and/or visual arts AND one semester in a second arts discipline taught by a licensed certified arts teacher. These requirements are severely limiting and take away any possibility of sequential arts education in any discipline. They should be revisited.
 - b. **The challenge of very small and/or co-located middle schools:** One of the great challenges in the system is providing certified arts instruction in the very small (100-200 students) middle schools or in middle schools that are co-located.
 - i. One solution is to have very small schools specialize in one or two arts areas – providing sequence if not scope. Even this is problematic if the school budget is so small that they can't even accommodate arts instruction at this basic level – and then the students get nothing.
 - ii. There has been success in having co-located or geographically close schools share the services of an arts specialist (s). This can provide some relief to budget-strapped schools and can be a way to provide more than one discipline at a site.

- c. Schools can also be given permission to **hire F status teachers** (possibly retired arts specialists or teaching artists with teaching licenses) as per diem session teachers – a less expensive way of assuring arts instruction for their students.
- d. **Build on successful models:** There are programs in the arts that are improving student outcomes and changing the culture of their schools. We need to build on their success and expand them to greater numbers of students.
 - i. **Arts Audition Boot Camp:** There are many middle school students who would like to attend a screened high school arts program but lack the audition or portfolio knowledge and preparation that might make that a reality. In 2014, a summer Middle School Arts Audition Boot Camp was started to give students the skills they would need to successfully apply. It served 90 students from 59 middle schools and the results were staggering. 81% received an offer from a screened high school; 64% received an offer from a screened arts-based high school; and 27% received an offer from LaGuardia High School. The program was repeated again in 2015 with 149 students from 77 schools – good growth -- but it deserves to be built to a scale where every middle school student who wants to attend a screened arts-based high school has access to the tools they will need to have a competitive opportunity for success.
 - ii. **Broadway Jr.:** 2015 marked the tenth anniversary of Broadway Jr., a program that served 44 middle schools, 146 teachers and 1,447 students. The program goal is to have each of the participating schools produce a musical production – but it does so much more. It encourages principals to commit to a major performing arts event in their school; it trains classroom teachers to serve as the production team (director, musical director, choreographer); it involves students with an interest in performing regardless of talent; it brings parents into the school to help with sets and costumes and, most importantly, to share in a positive activity in their child’s school; it has led to the hiring of theatre, music and dance teachers to build on the program’s success. Broadway Jr. creates successful communities within schools and it changes school culture. The annual performance is an event that can be built around – a celebration of everything that can be right in a school. But it needs to be expanded.
 - iii. **Arts Continuum:** Many students find that their arts programs in elementary school are a reason to stay engaged, and are disappointed when those programs are lacking when they get to middle school. This initiative, piloted in 44 schools in 2015, bridges arts learning by creating linking arts programs between feeder elementary and middle schools and partnering teachers and school leaders at each location.
 - iv. **Arts Matter:** an innovative staffing program that allows pairs of middle schools to share arts teachers with partial funding from the DOE, along with substantial supports for the school and new teachers. This initiative creates programs in arts needy schools and substantially increases access to the arts for underserved students.
 - v. **Turnaround Arts:** a program, run in partnership with the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities, that aims to narrow the achievement gap and increase student performance through intensive engagement in the arts, it will be carried out in four, central Brooklyn middle schools in 2016. Resources will include a summer training program for school leadership, in-school arts-based

professional development for all teachers, partnerships with cultural organizations and musical instruments and art supplies.

Looking Forward: a vision statement for arts education in NYC public schools

The great challenge for arts education in the NYC public schools is providing access and equity to every student in the system. The current system narrows options for students because it does not provide arts instruction in every school, for every student at every grade. This system limits a students' option to be college and career ready.

Much as the Mayor talks of "a tale of two cities," arts opportunities for public school children is a tale of two constituencies – children in arts rich schools and children in arts poor schools. This is often not about rich and poor communities – there are arts rich schools in challenged communities and arts poor schools in middle class communities. This is about leadership and will. We must create a system in which every child, in every school, in every year has access to a sequential, quality arts education.

We recommend that:

- Arts instruction should begin in pre-K and continue through high school. This instruction should be sequential and it should be based on the *Blueprints* which, grade by grade, discipline by discipline, build on prior knowledge.
- Principals include the arts as they make annual budget decisions. The arts should be built into every comprehensive educational plan in every school.
- Quality arts programs need to survive the vicissitudes of the budget or the circumstance of a new principal replacing a principal who was an arts advocate. There needs to be a policy in place to protect what is working.
- There be ongoing and frequent conversations and advocacy with NYS Education Department to create reasonable and rigorous arts instructional requirements.
- The DOE works more closely with higher education to assure that pipeline issues for teachers of the arts are addressed and that general classroom teachers receive arts education training.
- In addressing the needs of all learners, there should be a commitment to ensuring services to students with disabilities and English Language Learners.
- The excellent programs begun under this year's \$23 million dollar arts investment must be continued and expanded. The current four year commitment will just get these initiatives off the ground. They need to be protected and expanded long term and direct allocations of funding for the arts should be considered for every school.
- Acknowledge the important role the arts play in career development in NYC. Make students aware of existing opportunities and give them the skills they need to compete for these jobs. Recognize the value of the arts in the new creative industries. Media companies say that the

ability to draw is their first requisite in new employees. Without strong visual arts programs our students are left out – and this is true in every arts discipline.

- Let's finally get the facts! **Commission an independent study** to determine where we are based on information we have in the Annual Arts Report as to where there are and where there aren't arts services. We need financial numbers – how much would it cost to finally meet state requirements in the arts? Let's continue this argument from an informed and accurate position and as a first step in devising a five year plan to meet those requirements.

Conclusion

In today's City, with issues of inequality all around us, the question of providing equal opportunity for a quality arts education transcends education. It is an issue of justice. The arts, and the qualities and skills the arts build, offer young people a path to literacy, the ability to qualify for good jobs in the new economy, a sense of empathy for other views and other people, and the hope of becoming involved and productive citizens. An education without the arts is an education that handicaps rather than enables.

We can do this! We are finally on the right path. Led by a Mayor and a Chancellor who understand the stakes and with growing advocacy for this work by the City Council, other City agencies, school leaders, teachers, parents and caregivers, now is the time to make the arts an educational priority.

It will take will. It will take more money. It will mean changing minds – but it will not change the goal of giving every student a quality education.

And a quality education must include the arts!

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