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STATEMENT FROM ROBERT L. LYNCH, PRESIDENT & CEO OF AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS, ON THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

Thursday, December 10, 2015

Today, at the White House, I had the privilege of attending the signing of the Every Student Succeeds Act by President Obama. I joined other education leaders in applauding the end of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era and welcoming a new path for the American educational policy landscape. This new law holds great promise for restoring arts education as central to the school day and in the lives of students and our nation's future workforce.

For 14 years, from 2002 to 2016, NCLB policies resulted in many unintended consequences to schools, teachers, and students across the country. It demanded accountability steps that resulted in a hyper-focus on testing in a few

subjects, leaving other core academic subjects—like the arts—to be reduced, or in some places, abandoned. The bill signed today removes this onerous element of NCLB and provides support for a well-rounded education, with all the arts disciplines represented, to be realized throughout the country.

Today is a result of countless advocacy efforts. Americans for the Arts and more than 100 arts and arts education organizations have spent a decade prioritizing arts education legislative objectives. Among these organizations weighing in are discipline-specific groups representing dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts, as well as groups representing community-based and out-of-school time programs. The work of this coalition has advanced our objectives as seen by the inclusion of some of our key arts education priorities, including:

- Dedicated funding for arts education through the “Assistance for Arts Education” grant program
- 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.
- Integration of the arts in STEM programs – recognized in the field as “STEM to STEAM”

So what does this all mean for arts education moving forward? For a few years we have anticipated more local control and state level accountability in education. For the arts, this law means that states must invest in new arts education learning standards and resourcing of arts education to encourage creativity in our nation’s classrooms. For education providers, we must seek to provide all students with an education that is shared and coordinated between classroom teachers, arts specialists, and community partners. Because of the national networks fostered at Americans for the Arts—including local arts agencies, arts service organizations, and more—communities are well positioned to take on this shared delivery approach.

In recognition of the leadership shift from the federal level to the states, Americans for the Arts launched in 2014 our [State Policy Pilot Program](#) to advance state level arts education policy and ensure equitable access to arts education for all students across a state. We're working nationally to increase the number of states that are using the arts as a tool to achieve various goals of education reform, such as increasing student performance, improving school climate. Additionally, we're supporting teams of education leaders from 10 states who are working in a collective impact model to address policy issues like high school graduation requirements and teacher evaluation.

While much work lies ahead in implementing the new federal education policy, today is a day to mark and to celebrate, as we begin the next chapter of education in America. I know that the arts can be a critical component in ensuring that every student will succeed in school, work, and life. I call on all of the artists, educators, philanthropy partners, state and local arts agencies and arts advocates involved with Americans for the Arts to stand ready to move education forward together.

Read more from Americans for the Arts staff detailing the [arts education provisions](#) in the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Dec 10, 2015

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SENATE PASSES EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

Wednesday, December 9, 2015

On Wednesday, December 9, the Senate passed the Every Student Succeeds Act 85-12, on the heels of its passage in the House last week.

The bill — which the president is scheduled to sign Thursday, 12/9 — would "dump the current law's intense focus on test scores and the well-intentioned but impossible goal of having all students reading and calculating at grade level." We're one step closer to saying a permanent farewell to the widely unpopular No Child Left Behind Act.

This year, Americans for the Arts developed a national petition to the members of Congress serving on the conference committee to voice support for retaining arts-friendly provisions within the bill. Combined, almost 20,000 individuals signed the petition. Happily, many of these provisions made it into the final bill. Support for a well-rounded education that includes the arts, arts education funding, and thanks to the efforts of Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) on the conference committee, the inclusion of the arts in STEM courses - are all arts education highlights.





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"Waiving" Goodbye to No Child Left Behind

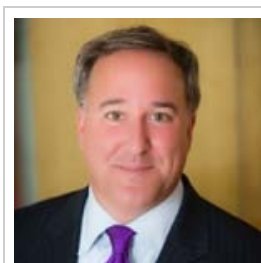
Posted by [Mr. Narric Rome](#), [Ms. Kate O. McClanahan](#),
Dec 02, 2015
[3 COMMENTS](#)

Over the last few years, Americans for the Arts has been covering each attempt by Congress to reauthorize the *Elementary & Secondary Education Act*, most recently recognized as *No Child Left Behind*.

We are pleased to say that this might be the final in a series of blog posts capturing the legislative efforts over the past few years. We began covering legislative developments in [2011](#), [2013](#) and then the 2015 actions ([January](#), [February](#), [July](#), and [September](#)) that led to this final bill.

Wait, This Year Was Fast...Too Fast?

It's true. Bringing Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN), a former governor, together with Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), a former preschool teacher, has led to legislative advancement usually unseen and unheard of:



[Mr. Narric Rome](#)



[Ms. Kate O. McClanahan](#)

unanimous Senate committee approval; an 81-17 Senate vote; nearly unanimous (38-1) Conference Committee approval, and now expected final passage in both houses and a presidential signature! Wow.



Sen. Alexander (R-TN) complimenting Sen. Murray (D-WA) once again, during his closing remarks following committee passage of the conference report.

We've got further details on how we got to this point further down in this blog post, but simply put: after 2 committee efforts, several legislative draft bills and a lot of talking about *No Child Left Behind*, waivers and inaction – Senators Alexander and Murray successfully brought the two sides together.

What's clear is this dream team duo has got a process. Perhaps we'll be looking for them to do a reunion tour in 4 years? Let's hope the team doesn't break up!

What Did We Want?

As you might know, Americans for the Arts and about 87 other arts and arts education organizations meet each year to publish a set of [policy briefs](#) to address arts education legislative objectives. Among these organizations weighing in are discipline-specific groups representing dance, music, media arts, theater, and visual arts. The group also includes arts education policy leadership from the [League of American Orchestras](#), [Arts Education Partnership](#), [NAMM](#) and [Grantmakers in the Arts](#).

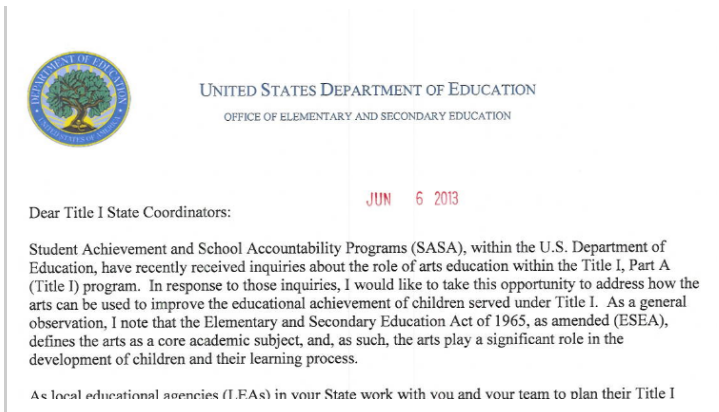
Through the year, Americans for the Arts and others have sent out e-blasts and action alerts calling on advocates throughout the country to take action in support of strengthening arts education in any legislative reauthorization. Most recently we developed a [national petition](#) to the members of Congress serving on the conference committee to voice support for retaining [arts-friendly provisions](#) within the bill. Combined, almost 20,000 individuals signed the petition. Happily, many of these provisions made it into the final bill.

What's In the Bill for Arts Education? We've got a list.

1) Support for Well-Rounded Education

Retaining the arts as a "core academic subject" – as it is in current law – has been a key legislative priority and an arts education message of many past [National Arts Advocacy Days](#). This definition in law has been critical to helping bring time and resources to arts education in schools—and help close the gaps in access to a complete education for every child that includes the arts.





Federal education funding (such as Title I, teacher training, and school improvement grants) is targeted to core academic subjects currently, and as such, the arts have been an eligible expenditure of these funds, but one that often still needed to be articulated and explained

in conversations all across the country. [Letters like this from the U.S. Department of Education](#) have been key in those conversations, documenting the eligibility of the arts as an expenditure of funds.

The new bill changes things a bit, in that there are no more defined core academic subjects, but in its stead (Sec.8002, "Definitions") is clear support for well-rounded education, which is defined, **and includes the arts**. This key language appears in Title I, the largest portion of funds, and is also carried through in over a dozen additional locations of the bill, including within targeted and school-wide grants.

Does this bill further define the arts? Sort of. The Senate committee report is expected to further clarify that the "arts" includes "dance, media arts, music, theatre and visual arts, and other arts disciplines..." which was an important consideration requested by many arts education organizations, including Americans for the Arts.

"(52) WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION.—The term 'well-rounded education' means courses, activities, and programming in subjects such as English, reading or language arts, writing, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, geography, computer science, music, career and technical education, health, physical education, and any other subject, as determined by the State or local educational agency, with the purpose of providing all students access to an enriched curriculum and educational experience."

2) Funding for Arts Education

As readers might recall, there was tremendous interest from

"SEC. 4642. ASSISTANCE FOR ARTS EDUCATION.

"(a) AWARDS TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE FOR ARTS EDUCATION.—

some conferees to consolidate and also terminate programs; for instance, "streamlining" and "reducing the federal footprint" were key priorities for Chairman John Kline (R-MN).

However, arts education survived as a continued program.

The bill (in Sec. 4642) includes key, dedicated, and distinct authorization to promote arts education under a new program, Assistance for Arts Education—similar to the current Arts in Education program. The program will promote arts education for disadvantaged students through activities including professional development for arts teachers, development and dissemination of arts-based educational programming in multiple arts disciplines, and national outreach activities that strengthen partnerships among local education agencies, communities, and national centers for the arts—all helping ensure that all students have access to a well-rounded education that includes the arts. Under the program, those receiving grants are also encouraged to coordinate with public or private cultural agencies, institutions, and organizations, including "museums, arts education associations, libraries, and theaters."

In order to reach agreement for this continued authorization, the authorized funding level did dip slightly, to \$20 million, despite currently being funded at \$25 million annually. Even with lower, future authorized funding, however, appropriators could still choose to fund at higher levels.

Further work on the implementation side will also be key, in order to continue competitive grant programs like those currently administered by the U.S. Department of Education under its Arts in Education program, where many local or state nonprofit organizations carry out Arts Education Model Demonstration grants and Professional Development for Arts Educators grants in partnership with local educational agencies.

Maintaining distinct arts education grant support is a huge win, especially after years of proposed terminations by Congress and the Obama administration's suggestions to consolidate this program with many others. Only through years of advocacy by the field and champions like [Sen. Thad Cochran \(R-MS\)](#) and former Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) has the program survived.

But there's more good news.

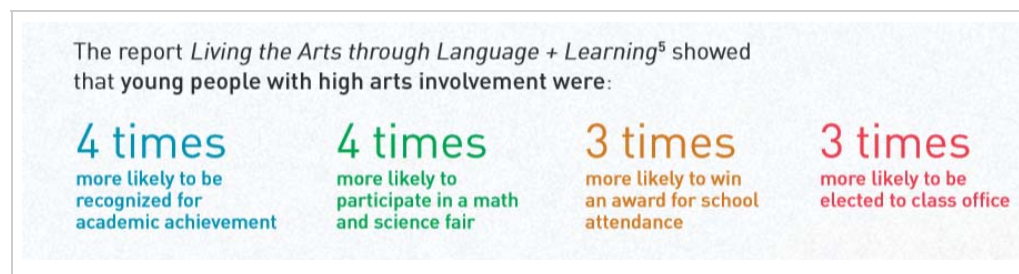
Out of the dozens of federal grant programs that were consolidated is a new Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant program (Sec.4104), of which at least 20 percent of the funds are directed to well-rounded education, which includes, "activities in music and the arts." This funding is distributed by formula (totaling \$1.65 billion for FY17, and \$1.6 billion for FY18-20), reaching states and school districts. Thus, the arts have equal footing with other academic subjects.

Additional Items

- Pre-School Grant Program – The bill authorizes a pre-school grant program (Sec. 9212) that was [funded by Congress last year](#) and for the first time, included the arts within the "Essential Domains of School Readiness" definition as an approach to learning. In addition, the program allows local preschool programs to coordinate with local arts organizations. The changes for this program were [successfully advocated](#) then by the Grantmakers in the Arts' Arts Education Funders Coalition (AEFC). With this authorization now in the bill it helps solidify the program going forward.
- Promise Neighborhoods – The bill authorizes grants for this program (Sec. 4624), which is designed to help improve educational outcomes and transform

communities. These plans include eligibility for extended learning time and partnerships between schools and community resources. [In past implementation, the arts are listed as one of four competitive priorities.](#)

3. Reporting

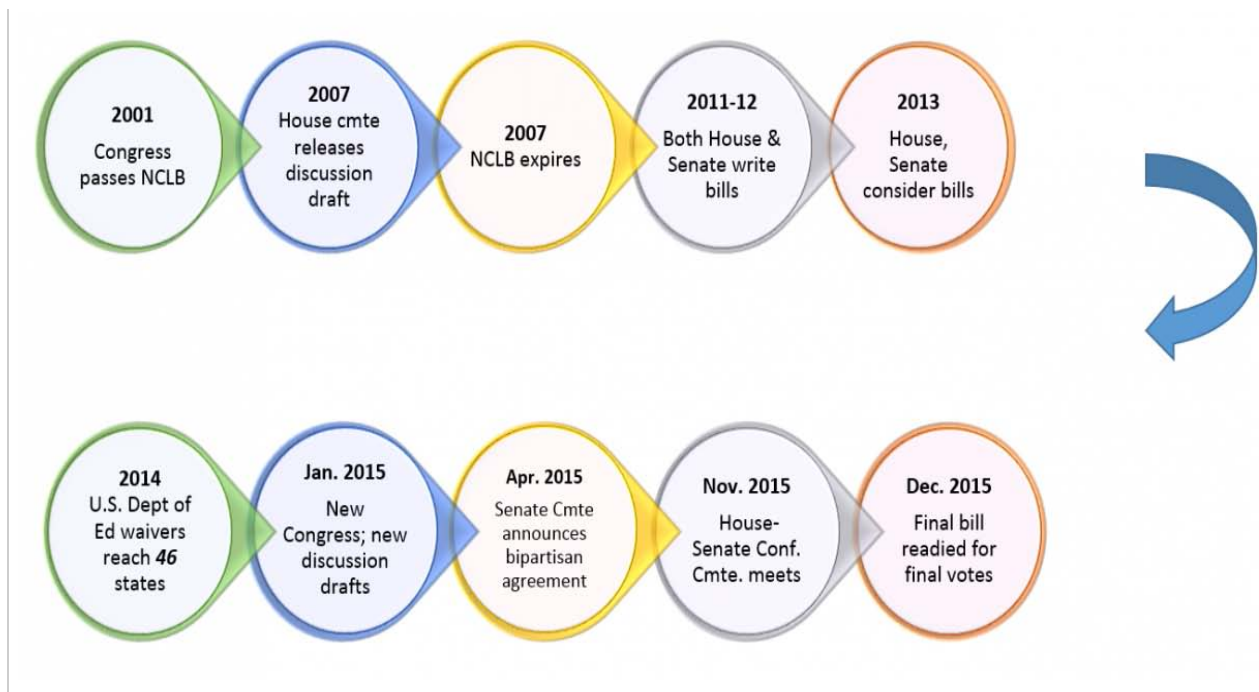


Despite the [impressive and well-documented benefits of arts education](#), there continues to be acute disparities in access to arts education for students. Reporting helps shed light and provides transparency in how much (or how little) arts education is being offered to our nation's students. The bill works to help ensure equitable access to a comprehensive education for all students by including some plan provisions designed "to ensure that all children receive a high-quality education, and to close the achievement gap between children meeting the challenging State academic standards and those who are not." Under the bill, each local educational agency plan is *required* to describe how they will monitor students' progress in meeting state standards, and how they will implement "a well-rounded program of instruction to meet the academic needs of all students." Outlining these steps and requiring the reporting will better help ensure that plans are met.

4. STEAM

One of the biggest surprises occurred during the 2.5 hour conference committee's amendment process. Thanks to the efforts of Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), a [member of the conference committee](#), the bill now includes support to schools that provide a well-rounded education through programs that integrate academic subjects, including the arts, into STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) courses.

"(vi) integrating other academic subjects, including the arts, into STEM programs to increase participation in STEM, improve attainment of STEM-related skills, and promote well-rounded education;"



The bill authorizes federal education programs for four years – shorter than past authorizations which were typically five years long.

Oh, and you might be wondering, so what's this new law going to be called? That was a compromise, too. The Senate version was *Every Child Achieves Act*. The House version was the *Student Success Act*. The agreement? ***Every Student Succeeds Act***.

Welcome to the world, [ESSA](#) 🇺🇸.

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3 responses for "Waiving" Goodbye to No Child Left Behind

Mrs. carmel ann collins says

December 04, 2015 at 2:56 pm

The integration of the arts in STEAM is great news for the arts. My concern would be to the quality of delivery of such integration. Will the integration be delivered by certified arts teachers?

Please [login](#) to post comments.

Ms. Kate O. McClanahan says

December 04, 2015 at 5:00 pm

In some cases! A theme of the bill is greater flexibility to the states, and so, much of the particular implementation will be decided by states. My view is that some states and school districts may decide to offer integration by certified arts teachers; some may not, and some might decide not to have it at all. With more responsibility for education policy shifting to the states, local action will continue to be critical in terms of what's offered at the local levels for students.

The specifics of the bill language is found within a section that lists activities to support well-rounded educational opportunities. The bill *REQUIRES* that states use a portion of funds to *develop* and *implement* both programs and activities that support access to a well-rounded education, but what programs and activities those are, are largely state discretion. The bill, though, shares some ideas to explain and illustrate intent, and one of those programs listed as possible is activities that improve instruction and engagement in STEM - and, *integrating the arts into STEM* is described as one of those ways to improve instruction and engagement. All because of the unanimous amendment secured by Congressional STEAM Caucus co-Chair Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)!

Please [login](#) to post comments.

Ms. Arlene Hood says

December 26, 2015 at 1:53 pm

If "the Senate committee report is expected to further clarify that the "arts" includes "dance, media arts, music, theatre and visual arts, and other arts disciplines..." then why is music listed specifically in bill #52 while all other art forms are not named but generalized under "arts"?

The Senate committee report is expected to further clarify that the "arts" includes "dance, media arts, music, theatre and visual arts, and other arts disciplines..." - See more at:

<http://blog.americansforthearts.org/2015/12/02/%E2%80%9Cwaiving%E2%80%9D...>

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