As revised by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) designates theatre and other arts areas as part of a “well-rounded education,” providing federal funding and more opportunities for increased student access to theatre education. Studies have shown that, when compared to other students, students with high arts engagement — including theatre — exhibit higher levels of self-concept in how they value themselves, increased abilities in performance skills and self-evaluation, a stronger tendency to employ empathetic thinking, and more opportunity to develop interpersonal skills.

To reinforce the positive impacts that theatre education has on students, we urge Congress to support the following for fiscal year 2024.

**FEDERAL APPROPRIATIONS**

**Support for Theatre Education**

**Assistance for Arts Education Program (AAE)**
Promotes arts education for all students, through activities such as professional development for arts educators; development and dissemination of accessible instructional materials; and community and national outreach activities that strengthen and expand partnerships among schools, local education agencies, and centers for the arts.

We request this program be funded at **$40 million** in FY2024.

**National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)**
Advances equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice as the largest funder of the arts and arts education.

We request this agency be funded at **$211 million** in FY2024.

**Institute of Education Sciences (IES)**
Collects issue-oriented data from state educational agencies and national samples of other educational organizations and participants, including districts, and public and private elementary and secondary schools, teachers and principals, and public libraries.

We request at least **$4 million** for IES in FY 2024 to implement a Fast Response Survey System study in the arts and that IES support other external efforts to collect data on access and participation in a wide variety of theatre education programs.

**IES National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP)**
Known as the “Nation’s Report Card,” provides important information about student achievement and learning experiences in various subjects to improve education policy and practice.

We support funding at a level sufficient in FY2024 to include the arts, economics, foreign (world) languages, and geography as part of the annual Nation’s Report Card.

**Student Support**

**Title I, Part A**
Provides funds to school districts to help disadvantaged children achieve proficiency on challenging academic standards and improve the performance of low-achieving schools.

We request this program be funded at **$20.5 billion** in FY2024.

We also request Congress to include language in the annual Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill directing the U.S. Department of Education to issue guidance for states and districts on the use of Title I funds to support theatre education as part of a “well-rounded education.”
Title IV, Part A
A flexible block grant program which supports activities in three broad areas:

- providing students with a well-rounded education (e.g., arts, college and career counseling, STEM, civics, advanced placement)
- supporting safe and healthy students (e.g., comprehensive school mental health, drug and violence prevention, health and physical education)
- supporting the effective use of technology

We request this program be funded at $1.48 billion in FY2024, as advised by the Title IV-A Coalition.

Nita Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers
A formula grant program that provides financial support to local communities for after-school, before-school, and summer learning programs serving students in low-performing schools.

We request this program be funded at $2 billion in FY2024.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) State Grant Program (Part B)
Provides special education services and supports to 7.4 million eligible children with disabilities to ensure a free and appropriate public education.

We request this program be funded at $19.5 billion in FY2024.

We also request that Congress explore pathways for the federal government to pay 40% of the average per pupil expenditure for special education.

Educator Support
Title II, Part A
Focuses on improving student academic achievement by bolstering skills and expertise of teachers, principals, and other educators and increasing the number of high-quality teachers and principals in schools.

We request this program be funded at $2.4 billion in FY2024.

We also request Congress to include language in the annual Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill directing the U.S. Department of Education to issue guidance for states and districts on the use of Title II funds to support professional learning opportunities for theatre and other arts educators.

Augustus F. Hawkins Center for Excellence program
Designed to support comprehensive teacher preparation programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and other minority-serving institutions (MSIs).

We request this program be funded at $300 million in FY2024.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Arts Education for All Act
(not yet reintroduced) by Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (OR-01)
The Arts Education for All Act would expand arts education and programming to America’s youngest learners, pre-K-12 students, and youths impacted by the juvenile justice system.
The bill includes provisions to support the professional development of arts educators and to amend the ESEA in order to provide more oversight into the implementation of arts education programs.

The bill also requires research on the use of arts education by the National Center for Education Research and the collection of data on arts education by the National Center for Education Statistics.

Pay Teachers Act

(to be introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders [VT-D])

The Pay Teachers Act focuses on the inequities facing the teaching profession in the United States, addressing the fact that over half of our nation’s public schools feel they are under-staffed, with the most severe teacher shortages disproportionately impacting schools that primarily serve students of color and those from low-income backgrounds. The Pay Teachers Act would:

- Triple Title I-A funding to $36.77 billion and help raise annual teacher salaries to at least $60,000 and help to ensure that teachers are paid a livable and competitive salary across their career.

- Triple funding for rural education programs ($430 million), provides additional $1 billion for the Bureau of Indian Education.

- Diversify and expand the teacher pipeline by authorizing a new Grow Your Own program within the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grant program and providing $550 million for TQP grants

- Invest $150 million in the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence program to support teacher preparation at HBCUs, TCUs and other minority-serving institutions (MSIs)

- Invest $300 million in IDEA, Part D to support the special education personnel pipeline.

- Support the teaching profession by expanding leadership and advancement opportunities by investing in and strengthening the Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) program ($100 million) and the Teacher and School Leader Incentive program ($200 million).