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Statewide Report on Arts Education Finds Nearly Every Child Has Access to Arts Education, With Access Increasing Over Past Five Years

TRENTON, NJ – Nearly every child in New Jersey has access to arts education in their school, according to a survey released today from the New Jersey Arts Education Census Project.

The survey is the most comprehensive assessment of arts education in New Jersey schools ever conducted and reflects data collected from 99 percent of New Jersey's public schools.

The Census Project is part of a public-private partnership that includes the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, New Jersey Department of Education, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, New Jersey Arts Education Partnership, ArtPride New Jersey Foundation, and Quadrant Arts Education Research.

The survey found that 97% of New Jersey students have access to arts education in their schools, with music and visual art nearly universally available.

The survey also revealed that New Jersey high schools with more arts education tended to have a greater percentage of students who were highly proficient in language arts on the High School Proficiency Assessment test. High schools with more arts education saw higher rates of students planning to enroll in a four-year college.

"The arts are a vital part of the high quality education New Jersey students need to thrive and succeed in today's competitive, creative economy," said Assistant Secretary of State Carol Cronheim.

Signaling the high value the Department of Education places on a complete education, this survey marks the second time the department has collected information about the implementation of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for visual and performing arts.

"We know that in order for students to truly be ready for the demands of the 21st century, we need to provide a broad curriculum that includes the arts," said Acting Education Commissioner Chris Cerf. "I am encouraged to see that the number of students with access to the arts in school continues to increase, and we will continue our work to strengthen those programs."

Other findings include:

- The number of New Jersey students with daily access to arts has increased by 54,000 since 2006, growing from 94% to 97% of all students.
- The percentage of New Jersey schools adopting core curricular standards in visual and performing arts has increased from 81% in 2006 to 97% in 2011.

- Well above 90% of all New Jersey schools use appropriately certified arts specialists as the primary provider for music and visual art instruction.
- More than 90% of New Jersey public schools interact with more than 972 community arts organizations to enhance visual and performing arts programs.
- While access to arts education has increased, spending on arts supplies and materials has declined by 30% at the elementary level and by 44% at the high school level.

The survey's findings are reported in *Keeping the Promise - Arts Education for Every Child: The Distance Traveled – The Journey Remaining*. The report's name is a nod to the benchmark study released in 2007, the nationally acclaimed *Within Our Power: The Progress, Plight and Promise of Arts Education for Every Child*, which helped shape the strategic efforts of the arts education community over the past five years.

Keeping the Promise reports that New Jersey has made great strides in achieving equal access to arts education for all students in the state but there is still work to do.

"There have been significant gains in key areas since the 2007 report on the implementation of policies and increased access to the arts. More remains to be done," said Bob Morrison of Quadrant and the survey project's director. "Two key findings include the need for better accountability for arts education. Great policies with uneven accountability mean many students who should participate in arts programs are not given the opportunity. Secondly, there are great arts programs across all economic categories in New Jersey, but for the first time we are seeing a connection between the affluence of a community and the level of arts education."

"The New Jersey Arts Education Census Project has once again demonstrated the importance of data in getting a full picture of the creative life of our schools," said Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation CEO Chris Daggett. "Significant gains have been made in the past five years in regards to policy yet the declines in student participation in the arts raise serious questions about barriers that still remain. I look forward to further research that will help inform next steps to ensure more New Jersey students benefit from a robust arts curriculum."

Survey findings and the full report is available at www.artsednj.org

The New Jersey State Council on the Arts is a division of the NJ Department of State. It receives funding in direct appropriations from the State of New Jersey through a dedicated Hotel/Motel Occupancy fee and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. Since 1966, its volunteer members and professional staff have worked to improve the quality of life in New Jersey by helping the arts to flourish. For more information about the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, please visit www.njartscouncil.org. Further information regarding the arts in New Jersey is found on an interactive web site, www.jerseyarts.com, and available on a toll-free hotline 1-800- THE ARTS.

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