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## House Passes Every Student Succeeds Act and Includes the Arts as Essential to a Well-Rounded Education

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed, by an overwhelming majority of 359-64, the new federal K-12 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The bipartisan bill will dismantle key aspects of the No Child Left Behind Act, returning substantial power over public education to the states.

The ESSA will restore leadership and decision-making power to states while maintaining national accountability, and a major focus will be placed on integrating the arts in the STEM education (science, technology, engineering and math).

The amendment states: “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.”

“As a member of the STEAM Caucus, I am very pleased that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) conference report authorizes dedicated funding for national priorities such as innovation, teacher quality, afterschool programming, STEM education, arts education, healthy students and literacy, as well as other key priorities,” said Corrine Brown, U.S. Representative for Florida’s 5th congressional district.

The history of this law has shown how consequential it is – for better and for worse – in terms of what our children learn from kindergarten through high school. The changes that will occur as a result of ESSA will mean several things for arts education, including:

1. Retaining the arts as a “core academic subject;”
2. Maintaining key, dedicated and distinct arts education grant support;
3. Requiring local education agencies to monitor and report on students’ progress;
4. Supporting schools that provide a well-rounded education through STEAM;
5. Continued authorization for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers;
6. Accountability for lower-performing schools;
7. Replacing adequate yearly progress (AYP) with multiple measure, including student engagement and postsecondary readiness; and
8. Including arts educators as eligible for professional development support.

“We are thrilled that arts will now be integrated alongside science, technology, engineering and math, converting STEM into STEAM, and more importantly, increasing the odds that students will engage with these subjects,” said Reverend Kimberly Hyatt, president & CEO of the Cathedral Arts Project. “The arts, particularly applied arts, have been demonstrated as an on-ramp to STEM subjects for students that are typically underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and math – particularly girls, ethnic minorities and low-income students.”

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*Now in its third decade of service, the mission of the Cathedral Arts Project is to enrich the quality of life in Northeast Florida through unleashing the creative spirit of young people. Our vision is for every child to benefit from a well-rounded education that includes dance, media arts, music, theatre and the visual arts. By providing direct instruction to students and teachers, facilitating partnerships and advocating for expanded access to arts education, the Cathedral Arts Project empowers children and youth to succeed in all areas of their lives. Learn more at [capkids.org](http://capkids.org).*

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