



2017 Arts Education Talking Points

How to use these talking points:

- Incorporate them into district communications to educate the community about arts education issues.
- Use them as fodder for newsletter articles or blog posts.
- Use them as conversation starters during department meetings.

1. What is the status of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Pennsylvania's ESSA state plan?

- ESSA was signed into law in December 2015; it shifts decision-making powers to states and local entities.
- ESSA lists seventeen subjects - including arts and music - in its definition of a "well-rounded education."
- Pennsylvania's draft ESSA state plan was released for public review on August 2, 2017.

The [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#) was signed into law by President Obama on December 10, 2015. ESSA reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, replacing the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The key difference in ESSA is that it shifts decision-making powers from the federal level to states and local entities.

While NCLB used the term "core academic subjects" and included the arts in the definition, the 2001 legislation went on to mandate high-stakes accountability testing only in math and English Language Arts. ESSA replaces NCLB's nine "core academic subjects" with the term "well-rounded education," which includes seventeen subjects plus latitude for states and districts to define more.

NCLB (2001)

ESSA (2015)

Core academic subjects:

- English, reading, or language arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Foreign languages
- Civics and government
- Economics
- Arts
- History
- Geography

Well-rounded education: (differences from NCLB are italicized)

- 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*
- *Any other subject, as determined by the State or local education agency*

Other differences in ESSA that affect the arts include:

- Flexible block grant program for all subjects defined in "well-rounded education"
- Requirement for each state to submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Education describing how it will meet the needs of all students
- Flexibility in defining student achievement and outlining what data is collected

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) released its [draft state plan](#) on August 2, 2017. After a mandated 30-day public review period, the plan must be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education by September 18, 2017.

More information:

- [Pennsylvania's state ESSA plan and related resources](#)
- ESSA resources from Arts Education Partnership - [quick guide](#), [mapping opportunities for the arts, well-rounded education](#)
- [ESSA resources from the National Association for Music Education](#)
- [ESSA resources from the National Art Education Association](#)

2. What were the results of the 2016 National Assessment of Educational Progress in the arts?

- 2016 NAEP arts was administered to eighth graders at 280 schools.
- This iteration of NAEP evaluated students in music and visual arts.
- Average scores were not significantly different from 2008 to 2016.

In 2016, the National Assessment of Educational Progress in the arts (NAEP arts), developed and administered by the National Center for Education Statistics, was conducted in 280 schools across the United States. 2016 NAEP arts evaluated eighth grade students' proficiency in responding to works in music and both creating and responding to works in visual arts. The last NAEP arts was conducted in 2008. [Results from 2016](#) indicate that:

- 63% of eighth graders in participating schools took a music class.
- 42% of eighth graders in participating schools took a visual arts class.
- Average scores in both music and visual arts were not significantly different from 2008 to 2016.
- Fewer students reported engaging in music or visual arts outside of school in 2016 than in 2008.

3. What is the status of the Pennsylvania state budget and education funding?

- Governor Wolf allowed the budget to pass into law without his signature on July 10, 2017.
- The legislature still must pass a revenue package in order for the budget to be considered balanced as required by the state constitution.
- School districts will receive \$100 million more in basic education funding than in 2016-2017.
- School district pension obligations will increase by \$144 million this year.

On July 10, 2017, Governor Tom Wolf announced that he would [allow the budget to pass into law without his signature](#). That [budget](#) included the following items:

- \$5.99 billion for basic education funding, an increase of \$100 million from 2016-2017
- \$1.12 billion for special education, an increase of \$25 million from 2016-2017
- \$5.95 million for teacher professional development, a decrease of \$500,000 from 2016-2017

Since July 10, legislators have been debating how to pay for the enacted budget, as the revenue package to pay for spending has not yet been approved by the legislature. Options currently being considered in the legislature include expanded gambling, changes to the tax code, privatizing some aspects of state liquor sales, borrowing money, and others; revenues must cover a more than \$2

billion shortfall. This revenue package must still be enacted before the budget is considered to be balanced as required by the state constitution.

Another budget-related issue is rising pension costs. Although the legislature recently passed [Act 5 of 2017](#), extensively amending the current pension laws and providing long-term relief for school districts, it is still estimated that employer (school district) contributions to the state pension system will increase \$144 million in 2017-2018. This means that already, before factoring in additional mandated costs for special education and any increases in salary, maintenance, transportation, or other expenses, school districts are essentially starting the year with \$44 million less in state money than last year. As local tax revenues are the most flexible funding for districts, those with robust local tax bases – primarily from industry and other businesses – will have the most options for supplementing these state funds. Those with less robust local tax bases will have less flexibility as they try to make up the deficit.

More information:

- [PDE's school budget page](#)
- [2017 School District Budget Report from PA Association of School Board Officials and PA Association of School Administrators](#)
- [PA School Boards Association's page on the pension crisis](#)

4. What is the status of teacher certifications and substitute teachers in the state of Pennsylvania?

- The number of graduates from PA teacher preparation programs decreased by more than 63% between 2013 and 2015.
- Teachers and administrators have reported to AEC that the substitute shortage is affecting educators' ability to participate in professional learning opportunities.
- Senate Bill 1312, introduced in 2015, proposed to allow pre-service teacher candidates to serve as substitute teachers.
- The bill was referred to the House Education Committee on July 1, 2016, and legislators have taken no further action.

Beginning in 2015, [newspapers across Pennsylvania](#) began writing about two separate but related issues: a declining number of teachers graduating from preparation programs at PA universities and a looming shortage of substitute teachers. According to these news reports, 16,631 people graduated from teacher preparation programs in PA in 2013. In 2015, that number was 6,125, a decrease of more than 63%. While anyone with a bachelor's degree may serve as a substitute teacher in the state of PA, it is common for people with teaching certifications to do so before securing a permanent position. The decreasing number of people obtaining teacher certifications will continue to reduce the number of available substitutes. In turn, AEC has heard from both teachers and administrators that out-of-class time to attend professional learning activities is limited, as districts can't guarantee that coverage will be available for a teacher's classes.

To alleviate the substitute shortage, the state legislature introduced [Senate Bill 1312](#) in 2015; the bill would allow districts to issue substitute teaching permits to anyone who has completed at least 60 semester hours in a teacher preparation program at a university in PA. The bill was referred to the House Education Committee on July 1, 2016, and legislators have taken no further action.