

A Richer Picture Of Arts Education Funding In The State Of California

BY CARLA JAVIER IN NEWS ON JULY 9, 2018 7:45 AM



Fourth graders at Meadows Arts and Technology Elementary School take part in a music class on Tuesday morning, March 31, 2015. (Photo by Maya Sugarman/KPCC)

The new state budget — the last one signed by Governor Jerry Brown — has over \$50 million more for funding arts and arts education.

We did a break down of the dollars to see where the money is going.

Starting with the California Arts Council.

What did they get?

Each year since the 2016-2017 fiscal year, the California Arts Council — which, among other things, awards grants to arts and arts education programs around the state — has been working with \$15.1 million from the state's general fund.

This year, the council got a \$8.8 million boost from the general fund. (They also get other funding from sources like the National Endowment for the Arts, the sale of specialty license plates and voluntary contributions filed with taxes).

"The plan is to reach a lot of the applications that came in that we weren't able to fund first time around," the council's executive director Anne Bown-Crawford explained.

The arts council awarded 1,080 grants this year, including — full disclosure — one to our mothership, KPCC.

So now, let's look at arts education.

On paper, the field made out pretty well: \$44 million in one-time funding. Joe Landon, the executive director of California Alliance for Arts Education, said he's thrilled to see the money allocated in the new budget.

"It was a long journey getting there. We had many questions about how that would turn out," he said. "But [state] Senator Allen has really prevailed both philosophically and tactically ensuring that money is included."

That process began with SB 933, a bill Landon's group sponsored with Santa Monica state senator Ben Allen to establish an arts ed grant program.

It's important to note, though: the money that made it into the final state budget is actually shared money.

"It's being funded through federal Title IV money, which covers both arts education and health issues for students," Landon explained. "So it's a strategic move to pair those two issues together and to set aside money for that."

The state's Department of Education will determine a grant process for the funds, which can go to districts to support arts education or to health programs in schools.

THE MEANING IN THE MONEY

Both Bown-Crawford and Landon said they thought the big boosts sent a message. Bown-Crawford pointed out that Governor Jerry Brown, whose last term is coming to an end, actually created the California Arts Council in 1976.

"I think it's a very very clear message from the governor's office that the arts make a difference, that the arts can help communities meet challenges and develop solutions to some of the really tough problems we have going on — climate change, mass incarceration, health care needs, school bullying, racial profiling," Bown-Crawford said.

Landon said he thinks the allocation shows "the legislature intends to live up to the commitment of our state education code" and marks "a moment of in our journey of bringing arts back to the core of education."

While \$44 million could seem small given the over 6 million students in the state, Landon said he remains hopeful.

"Our hope is that we can use this investment from the state to build upon a much larger investment in the future," Landon said. "There will be a new governor coming in next year, and we intend to show the results of this investment and to make the case that we need to do much more to make sure that this message is heard by the state, and these learning opportunities are delivered for every student."