

ARTS ED
NOW!

SCHOOL
BUDGET
PROCESS
Guide

Planning for Fall 2023/24 School Year

ARTS ED NJ
Many Partners. One Voice.



As we shift back into pre-pandemic classroom models, school budgets should align as well. Arts education is often the first to experience budget cuts - but is the best suited to help ease the way back into learning at school through creative thinking, social emotional connections, and self-expression. Right now, school boards should be looking to support and even increase resources for arts education to help their students as they continue to make their way back to in-person learning together.

As arts educators are working to return enrollment to pre-pandemic numbers, **now is the time** to plan for programs being fully in place in the next 2023/24 school year.

And planning starts with the School Budget.

As part of our responsibility as concerned citizens and parents, we need to monitor school planning for the new year. By becoming involved early in the cycle, the budget outcome will never be a surprise. By monitoring the following eight-step process you may ensure there are no surprises.

To be successful it is important to have a representative of your group **ATTEND EVERY BOARD MEETING**. It does not have to be the same person. **SOMEONE** representing the arts should be attending to pick up on any early warning signs regarding future funding issues or potential budget concerns.

Reality Check



Arts education needs to be a priority to **combat ongoing mental health challenges** as well as to **aid social and emotional learning**. Make it clear that this needs to be a priority for your school board for years to come.

IMPORTANT



For 2023/2024 you should pay attention to see if the budget being devised is based on the 2022/2023 school year (COVID) or the 2020/2021 school year (budget before COVID). COVID program adjustments should not become permanent, especially as we are seeing a return to pre-COVID classroom models.

Short term enrollment declines in arts programs because of COVID should not be used as justification to reduce staffing or cut programs!

Tip

How can I let my school district know that arts education is essential for students?

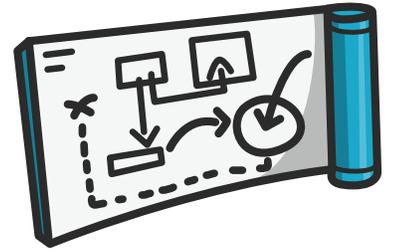
Find out when and where your local school board meets by checking the website of your local district. Then put the meetings on your calendar and plan to show up!



Step
#1

Starting the Budget Process

In most school districts, the budget process is initiated by the superintendent or the chief business officer. Under that person's leadership, district employees assigned to budget development spend much of the fall gathering data, selecting from available scenarios, and making recommendations.



Two documents may be available during this early portion of the eight-step budget process. The first is the "assumption statement" which describes or outlines key assumptions and formulas to be used in the development of the budget. The second document is a budget calendar of major steps in the budget process. If the school district does not publish a calendar, the person in charge of the budget process can provide information on the timetable.

During this early part of the budget process, people who monitor the process (i.e. community members and parents) should make it a point to get to know board members, and learn "how they stand on music and arts education." They should not be strangers.



If you cannot attend all the meetings, it is important to identify and connect with other advocates who support arts education in your district. Plan ahead to have someone present and to report back to you.



Step
#2

Board Operations Committee Meets

The operations committee of the board will review budget concepts and proposals presented by the administration. The operations committee members will ask questions, request additional information and discuss spending priorities for the new year. The administration takes the feedback and adjusts or revises the budget and identifies board members who serve on this committee. During this process, the state provides local districts with state budget guidelines (including projected local share of state aid to fund education). These guidelines are used to help solidify revenue projections for the school district.



Reality
Check

You do not have to have a question or comment to attend the School Board meeting. Your presence (even with your camera turned off) is essential! You need to be present and informed. We will help you with the rest.

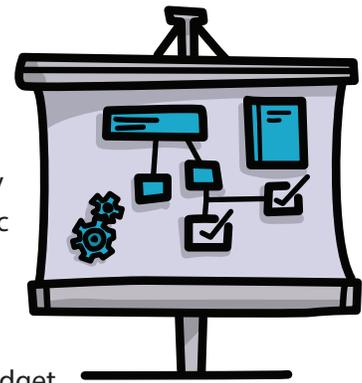
Note: Many arts programs are beginning to resemble that of years prior to COVID-19's impact. But it is still imperative that funding be utilized to insure all arts programs are fully supported.

EARLY
FEB

Step
#3

Preliminary Budget Presentation to the Public

During a public meeting of the Board of Education the preliminary budget will be presented and discussed. The documents are public and should allow advocates to discover areas of concern like staff reductions, program cuts, and resource reductions. Board members may be approached by the public with specific questions or concerns once they have received the preliminary budget.



Tip

Report back if you hear something that is questionable regarding the visual and performing arts in your district. We are here to guide you and support you with next steps.



LATE
FEB

Step
#4

State Aid is Released

State funding for local school districts (state aid) is released following the governor's budget address (tentatively scheduled for late February 2023). This will be the first indication of any significant adjustment (positive or negative) to state funding for the local school district. A reduction in state aid may foretell the need for budget cuts. Once state aid is presented, the administration will meet with the operations committee again to discuss any adjustments that may be required.



Reality
Check

Do not hesitate to ask questions or ask us for help! Questions and concerns should be raised early in the process, since adjustments are less likely to occur late in the budget process.

EARLY
MAR

Step
#5

Public Presentation of the 2023/2024 School Budget

This is the formal publishing and public viewing of the detailed budget. Again, this usually occurs relatively late in the budget process. There are only a few weeks to read it, ask questions, and propose changes. Any areas of concern should be identified and addressed immediately with the superintendent and members of the Board of Education.



Tip

Don't be intimidated! Your presence is important to share a message that the arts are valued and your presence will demonstrate that in a tangible way. Reach out and invite stakeholders and advocates to join you.



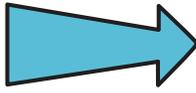
MID
MAR

Step
#6

School Board Approves the Tentative Budget



The budget must then be submitted to the County Superintendent for review.



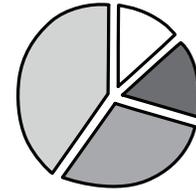
It is important to note that you can attend school board meetings that are not in your district.



END
APR

Step
#7

Public Hearing



The school board holds one or more public hearings to solicit citizen comments on the budget. However, once it's gone this far, it's difficult to make changes.



Reach out to the arts educators in your district!
Showcasing student performances or students' artistic works at every school board meeting can demonstrate the value of arts education and its impact on students' well-being.



Step
#8

Final Budget Approval



The final step is budget adoption and funding approval. After the public hearings, the board adopts a budget with whatever amendments it deems necessary. This often occurs at the same meeting as the public hearing.

Reality
Check

NJ School Boards are required to hold public hearings.
The goal is to get parent and community feedback on their budgeting and plans. You need to be "In the Room Where it Happens".

IMPORTANT

It takes time and energy to monitor a local school budget. Before you begin, we suggest that you acquire and review online resources (including the prior year's budget which should be available on the district website) to help understand the school budget process. This information will help you strategize.



EXAMPLE NJ SCHOOL DISTRICT TENTATIVE BUDGET CALENDAR

2023/2024

(sample dates only - your district calendar will be different)

State budget guidelines and state aid release dates are tentative

OCT

October enrollment data reviewed - determine projection

October Budget information provided to supervisors & directors

NOV

November Budget documents due into the business office

Nov - Dec Administration meets with new admin team to review budget requests

DEC
JAN

Dec - Jan Operations committee reviews budget concepts/proposals

Late January Receive state budget guidelines

Late January Calculate tuition rates

Late January Preliminary budget presentation to public

FEB

Late February State aid released

Late February - Early March With state aid, Administration meets with Operations Committee

MAR

March Public presentation of the budget to the Board

Mid-March Board of Education approval of the proposed tentative budget

Mid-March Submission of tentative budget to the County office

APR

Late April Public hearing and final approval of budget