



Alaska State Council on the Arts

To: Members of the State Board of Education & Early Development
From: Andrea Noble, Director
Date: October 14, 2026
Item: 23.0H

Standing General Report

Agency Priorities

In addition to overlapping agency budget and program planning as detailed in reports from ASCA's program directors, most of my time this quarter has been spent on preparing for the NEA Chairman's Alaska Visit in August, administration support for the Executive Director Search Committee, communication with funders regarding ASCA's leadership transition, and the FY2027 Annual State Arts Agency Partnership Agreement Application to the National Endowment for the Arts.

Program Highlights and Updates

The Alaska Arts Education Data Project held an annual meeting on August 3-4, hosted by project managing partner, Alaska Arts Education Consortium (AAEC). New member participants in 2026 include Representative Maxine Dibert from Fairbanks. Representative Justin Ruffridge has also participated in the Data Working Group but was unable to attend the annual meeting. The "Big Team" Arts Education Data Project members who were able to travel to Anchorage for the two-day meeting gathered at the BP Energy Center and the meeting included review of the just published, third year of Arts Education Data from the school districts who participated in the annual survey.

In 2026, "Complete or updated data were received from 52 out of 53 districts. The second round data was used for the one remaining district, which enabled a **100% response rate. This report shares a full landscape picture of arts education in Alaska's public Pre-K-12th grade education system.**" The first year (2024) 18 school districts participated; the second year 42 districts participated. The reporting for these first three years of the Arts Education Data Project are available on the AAEC website at: <https://akartsed.org/alaska-arts-education-data-project/>.

We are also seeing the value of this commitment to data and community conversations around our understanding of the access Alaska's students have to the arts in public schools. The project is beginning to highlight policy and practice that could help our school districts increase access and quality of arts education. It is also drawing new and important partnerships. For example, Sealaska Heritage Institute—a regional indigenous cultural organization—approached the Alaska Arts Education Consortium (AAEC) to partner with them on an analysis of the data for Southeast school districts that could be used to support an application for funding in the region.

This has further prompted conversation in the Arts Education Data Project Big Team at the annual gathering, about how this effort can attract additional partners and supporters, and the group decided to add a working group for "Sustainability" alongside the existing "Access" and "Data" working groups.

The process of alignment of the New Visions Network, the Arts Education Data Project and the AAEC Rural Arts Institute continues, pursuant to the Special Project Grant award made to AAEC in Q1 of FY27 to build a “Collective Network” of Alaska school districts. AAEC is in the process of hiring “Network Mentors” who will help to coordinate the ongoing convening of Collective Network district representatives, and will have the opportunity to learn from Annie Calkins, who has coordinated the New Visions Initiative for ASCA since its inception.

Budget/Finance/Administration Updates

Budget planning and completion of the FY2027 Spend Plan for OMB occurred in late June and July. Actual license plate revenue was made available to ASCA in August, and budget adjustments have been made to reflect the actual revenue of \$110,000 for FY2027, not \$207,000 as reported in May. All FY2027 Grants previously approved by the Council in June were unaffected by the adjustments.

ASCA’s budget team will reproject income and expenses again in December, and after the new Executive Director is hired, with an anticipated decrease in personnel expenses. In FY2027, reimbursable service costs that are determined by DEED have increased. Any cost increases are a challenge for ASCA when state and federal funding remain flat year after year. License plate fees are helpful in boosting the operating support grants, but the long-term challenge will be funding to advance the growth of grants and programs in alignment with ASCA’s mission, inflation and greater needs of the field – especially in Arts, Health and Well-Being and Creative Aging.

Alaska Arts and Culture Day

Sponsored by Representative Carolyn Hall last session, HB221, "An Act establishing the first Friday of every October as Alaska Arts and Culture Day; and providing for an effective date.", became law on July 4, 2026. First introduced in May 2025, it is with great excitement that we will be able to celebrate Friday, October 2, 2026 as Alaska’s first official Arts and Culture Day.

National Endowment for the Arts Visit to Alaska

This August 13-14, we had the pleasure of hosting NEA Chairman Mary Anne Carter and her senior leadership team:

- Carolyn Coons - Public Affairs Specialist | Office of Public Affairs
- Bill O'Brien - Senior Advisor for Innovation | Office of the Senior Deputy Chairman
- Bo Bryant - Director of Public Affairs and Government Relations

Chairman Carter was enthusiastic, curious and informed while she held meaningful conversations directly with artists and arts leaders. She also visited Alaska during her previous tenure as Chairman of the Endowment 2017-2021.



The video link for a summary of NEA Chairman Carter's visit to Alaska can be found here:
https://youtu.be/aBmN_HJzdlS?si=0fl8gHpD4lq4O61h



Calista Education Foundation Executive Director Denise Brown-Chythlook (4th from left) and Andrew Guy (6th from right, standing), President and CEO of Calista Corporation, warmly welcomed Chairman Carter and provided Yup'ik language coaching at their headquarters in Anchorage.



Arts Policy Lunch in Palmer - Back Row: Dr. Deena Bishop, Commissioner of Education, Carmen Summerfield, Director of Valley Arts Alliance, Mary Anne Carter, NEA Chairman, Senator Lisa Murkowski, Benjamin Brown, ASCA Chairman. Front Row: Andrea Noble, ASCA Executive Director, Representative DeLena Johnson, Bill O'Brien, NEA Senior Advisor for Innovation, La Creatia Wilson, ASCA Trustee.



At the Palmer Museum of History and Art, Benjamin Brown, Chairman Carter, Dylainie Nathlich, Palmer Museum Executive Director, and Lainie Dreas, Alaska Theatre of Youth Executive Director, discuss how Alaskans meet the challenges of our remote and rugged environment.