



Arts Education in
Maryland Schools

FY24 ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2023 - JUNE 30, 2024

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-LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-

Dear Arts Education Family,

The power of the arts has always been clear to me. As a student, I thrived in the performing arts; as a teacher I saw the transformative impact that learning a musical instrument had upon my students' emotional and academic development. This year, as a new mom, I am reminded once again of the centrality of the arts to our humanity as my daughter learns to express herself and find joy through movement, music, and art.

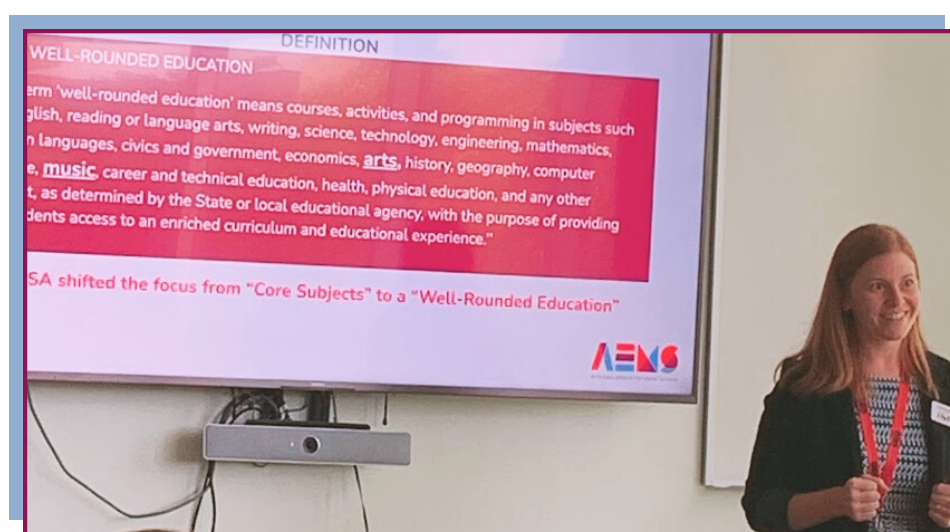


Creative expression is at the core of our humanity and our society. Every child deserves the opportunity to develop artistic skills that will help them explore their identity and process the world in and around them. At AEMS we believe that the right to arts education is a central component of every child's public education.

This year, we heard from hundreds of arts educators about their successes and challenges providing robust arts education to their students. We shared their feedback with education decision makers and collaborators to take steps that uplift advancements and address the barriers. We continued to convene leaders in the field to advocate, build resources, and provide professional learning opportunities. Maryland is fortunate to be the home of so many fierce and inspirational leaders in arts education who fight to provide students access to high quality education every single day.

To the educators, parents, artists, leaders, supporters, and students who stand up every day to provide and advocate for the arts education that every student deserves, **thank you.** It takes a village, and we are grateful that you are a part of our village.

-Rachel McGrain



ABOUT AEMS

Mission

Arts Education in Maryland Schools (AEMS) is a 501(c)(3) Maryland non-profit organization committed to ensuring that all students in the state of Maryland have access to high quality arts education by mobilizing power to communities through:

- advocacy programs,
- professional and leadership programs,
- and resource building and sharing.



Vision

We envision a public education system in Maryland that supports, cultivates, nurtures, and uplifts ALL students' creativity through a robust arts education experience so that they can thrive in a healthy society.

Values

Community

We believe that the community is the most important part of our advocacy efforts. We want to illuminate and highlight the power communities have to make systemic changes.

Creativity

We believe that creativity is critical for humans to thrive. It is what makes humans human.

Growth

We believe that growth is the most important aspect of learning. We are invested in the growth of our constituents, board, and staff through professional and leadership development.

Racial Equity

We understand the history and impact of educational policies on our most historically resilient communities and we commit to addressing this through our work. Our work is rooted in anti-racism and we believe that arts education can be a tool to create systemic change within education.

ABOUT AEMS CONT.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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AEMS Staff

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Peter Dayton, Director of Operations

Alissa Gittens, Communications Manager

Patrick O'Reilly, Policy & Operations Assistant

Susan Burton, Bookkeeper

ADVOCACY PROGRAMS

As the landmark Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation that will transform Maryland's public education system begins to be implemented, AEMS has risen to meet the various challenges that stem from the size and scope of these reforms. There is a high risk of negatively impacting access to quality arts education without intentional measures to ensure the arts are preserved and elevated through the process of implementing these changes. New policies, public messaging, and budget challenges have all characterized this transitional landscape, and AEMS has been highly responsive and made sure that decisionmakers hear the voice of the arts.

AEMS' FY24 advocacy activities included:

NOVEMBER 2023

- AEMS welcomed Interim Superintendent Carey Wright with a reminder of the significance of the arts to a well-rounded education.
- AEMS testified to the State Board of Education about the need to consider arts within the Blueprint's CCR (College & Career Readiness) standard.

MARCH 2024

- AEMS wrote a letter to the AIB asking for a public correction to erroneous public statements made about the arts while discussing the implementation of the Blueprint in Worcester County.
- AEMS advocated on behalf of Cecil County public schools during their budgeting process.
AEMS advocated on behalf of the Howard County public schools 3rd grade strings program.
- AEMS wrote a letter to Interim Superintendent Carey Wright, announcing National Arts in Our Schools Month and updating MSDE on key matters previously communicated to the Superintendent.
 - The Maryland State Board of Education publicly acknowledged National Arts in Our Schools Month and the contributions of the arts to whole child development during a March Board of Education meeting.

DECEMBER 2023

AEMS sent arts recommendations to the Local Blueprint Implementation Coordinators in all 24 counties.

FEBRUARY 2024

AEMS testified in support of the Arts Incubator Workgroup (HB1451/SB764), which is crucial to help further sustain and invest in our creative arts economy. The arts are a cultural asset and a significant contributor to our state's economic vitality.

APRIL 2024

AEMS gave a stakeholder engagement presentation to the Maryland State Board of Education.

MAY 2024

AEMS wrote a letter to Cecil County Board of Education and Superintendent requesting a public correction to erroneous public statements made about the arts during a budget presentation to the Cecil County Council and taking accountability for data inaccuracies in AEMS' previous letter.

JUNE 2024

AEMS advocated on behalf of Urbana High School in Frederick County to preserve their dance educator staffing and program.

Fine Arts Education Advisory Panel



As required by Maryland regulation, the FAEAP is a body convened for the purpose of advising the State Superintendent on issues and best practices relevant to fine arts education for students in Maryland. Due to significant personnel shifts at the Maryland State Department of Education, the FAEAP did not convene between December 2021 and May 2023. AEMS rallied the arts education professional associations to collectively urge the re-empaneling of this important body in a letter to the Maryland State Superintendent of Schools, which was successful in reinstating the panel beginning in May 2023.

AEMS then served as a key collaborator in forming and facilitating the panel with AEMS Executive Director serving as co-chair alongside Karl Stewart, Supervisor of Visual and Performing Arts for Carroll County Public Schools. The panel has 27 members, representing all of the geographic regions of Maryland and diverse members of the arts education ecosystem including arts educators, school administrators and counselors, higher education representatives, community arts groups, and a student member.

Throughout the 2023-2024 school year, the panel convened to discuss pressing issues facing Maryland's public school arts educators and sent two sets of recommendations to the Superintendent. These recommendations address issues around 1) strengthening support for conditionally licensed public school arts educators, 2) the creation of an arts endorsement that students can pursue for their high-school diploma, and 3) measures to ensure transparency and equity in providing arts education to Maryland public school students.

Statewide Coalitions

AEMS continued to serve as an active member of the Maryland Education Coalition, which represents parents, civil rights, & special student population groups, by attending and contributing to strategy meetings throughout the year and during the Maryland General Assembly session.



Additionally, AEMS worked actively within the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Coalition, a group of statewide education advocates monitoring and advocating for good-faith implementation of the Blueprint legislation. Priorities for the Blueprint Coalition included ensuring that implementation timelines are adhered to and that appropriate revenue measures are in place to ensure that the full Blueprint could be funded.



ADVOCACY PROGRAMS CONT.

Baltimore Arts Education Initiative



Baltimore City Public Schools in partnership with Arts Every Day launched the Baltimore Arts Education Initiative (BAEI) in Fall 2017 in response to the decline of arts education access districtwide. AEMS serves on the policy and budget committee, advisory committee, instrumental music working group, and fine arts teacher pipeline working group for BAEI. This year’s activities included the drafting of an “arts-rich school” rubric, the adoption of the Fine Arts Strategic Plan 2.0, and the refinement of a proposed instrumental music expansion plan.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Anti-Racism in Arts Education Satellite Sessions

In FY24, AEMS restructured our annual Symposium to continue our commitment to anti-racism while also meeting the observed needs of AEMS’ constituents. Responding to the strain on educators’ capacity, AEMS modified its virtual symposium to a series of in-person “Symposium Satellites” at existing convenings.

In this model, AEMS hires content experts in the specific fields of dance, music, theatre, and visual arts to deliver anti-racist professional development at the annual conferences of the four arts educator professional associations. In its pilot year of the Symposium Satellites, AEMS presented at the Maryland Arts Educators Association, Maryland Music Educators Association, and Maryland Theatre Education Association conferences.

SESSIONS OFFERED

- **MTEA** ~ Creating an Anti-Racist Theatre Community
- **MMEA** ~ Assimilation v. Integration in Music Education: Leading Change Toward Greater Equity
- **MAEA** ~ Opinion is the Lowest Form of Knowledge



39 ATTENDEES

SURVEY OUTCOMES

88%

Agree or Strongly Agree that the information presented was helpful or useful in their understanding of antiracism in arts education and that they would be interested in participating in future AEMS sessions.



A lot of what was discussed really affirmed what I do in my class and also showed me what I can do more of, like having even more student voice.

– Session Attendee



Maryland Arts Summit

On June 20th and 21st, 2024, Maryland's arts sector gathered for the annual Maryland Arts Summit, presented by Maryland Citizens for the Arts at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. For the second year, AEMS presented an entire track of arts education advocacy



sessions to inform the wider Maryland arts ecosystem about the legislation and policies surrounding arts education, the challenges arts educators face, and ways that they can get involved and help advocate for increasing arts education access to Maryland's public school students. Presenters included AEMS staff, state leaders, LEA leadership, and advocacy

organizations. AEMS is grateful to Maryland Citizens for the Arts for their partnership in incorporating the AEMS Arts Education Advocacy track in their Summit.

ARTS EDUCATION ADVOCACY TRACK

SESSIONS OFFERED

- ~Education Power Structures
- ~Overview of Arts Education Advocacy
- ~Rallying Parents to your Cause
 - ~Arts Education Data
- ~State and Federal Arts Education Legislation & Policy
- ~AEMS Office Hours



54 ATTENDEES

SURVEY OUTCOMES

- 100%** Agree or Strongly Agree that AEMS' presentations were helpful or useful in their understanding of arts education advocacy
- 100%** Likely or very likely to attend another AEMS session or recommend AEMS presentations to a friend/colleague

SESSION FEEDBACK



It was powerful to learn about other parents working to organize parents around work I also care about.

The presentation gave us a lot of good information as to how we, as teachers, can access funding for our programs and who has the power, and how the funding is distributed.



Maryland Center for Creative Classrooms



Summer MC3

In the summer of 2023, Maryland Centers for Creative Classrooms provided one week of hybrid professional learning for classroom educators and teaching artists with an emphasis on teacher and student wellness. Attendees experienced visceral reactions of pent up feelings and were able to decompress by falling into their practice in the most organic, soft, and gentle ways possible. Participants developed arts-based strategies to foster social emotional learning, healing, and mindfulness. They connected with their own art practice to re-energize their teaching and build connections amongst new and veteran educators.

82 REGISTRANTS



34 ATTENDEES



The entire activity broke down creating choreography in a way I haven't been taught. So I will definitely use this method with my students.

– Session Attendee

Maryland Micro-Credentials

Maryland Micro-Credentials for Creative Classrooms (Mcreds) is a suite of competency-based professional learning courses for arts educators and community teaching artists. Throughout the 2023-2024 school year, Mcreds offerings included "Arts Education through a Trauma-Informed Lens" and "Supporting LGBTQ+ Students and Families."

SESSIONS OFFERED

Arts Education through a Trauma-Informed Lens - Pt. I

Arts Education through a Trauma-Informed Lens - Pt. II

Supporting LGBTQ+ Students and Families - Pt. I

Supporting LGBTQ+ Students and Families - Pt. II



25 ATTENDEES

14 ATTENDEES

66

SESSION FEEDBACK

I want to thank Alyssa for speaking about neurodiversity and explaining that the way people focus/pay attention can present in different ways---I have never had a presenter ever say that in a class/training and I LOVE and appreciate that so much, as a fellow neurodiverse person. Lyndsay, you are so well spoken and knowledgeable. I don't know how you coordinate all those tabs! You are talented with multi-tasking. Thank you both so much for your support and hard work. It's inspiring!

PROFESSIONAL & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CONT.

Maryland Masterclass

The 2023 - 24 Maryland Masterclass focused on the relatively recent discipline of Media Arts that is guiding teachers to use AI tools to stimulate rather than obfuscate students' creativity, led by Strikeware Collective. Despite all misgivings and apprehensions, AI is here to stay and this program has allowed participating teachers to be on the cutting edge of using AI to support art.



11 ATTENDEES

SURVEY OUTCOMES

90%

Agree or Strongly Agree that the information presented will be helpful in their teaching and learning practice.

SESSION FEEDBACK



Thank you for making such courses available to teachers - this experience is so unique & I love how everyone shared their backgrounds because we have such a diverse group of makers (and even people who don't identify as artists yet!) that I am really looking forward to seeing what everyone produces."

Anti-Racist Educators of the Arts Learning Lab (A-REALL)

Now in its third cohort, A-REALL has evolved to a book club format to meet the needs and capacity of Maryland's arts educators and teaching artists. The cohort convened virtually throughout 2024 for an in-depth exploration and analysis of the text *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain* by Zaretta Hammond. Structured assignments included creative reflections and creating an anti-racist lesson plan.



20 PARTICIPANTS

EXIT SURVEY OUTCOMES

100%

Agree or Strongly Agree that "I feel equipped to bring new competencies, knowledge and skills in culturally responsive teaching

SESSION FEEDBACK



The ability to connect and unpack the content with others allowed me to think about things from a different perspective. The guided collage activity was a really cool platform I hadn't used before and I liked the challenge of how to incorporate the levels of my thinking visually. The biggest concept I'm walking away with is that of the alliance and how to leverage that in my role as a teacher leader.

RESOURCE BUILDING & SHARING

National Arts In Education Week (NAEW)

During NAEW 2023, AEMS provided our social media followers with information about pathways to careers in the arts disciplines of visual art, dance, theatre, media arts, and music. AEMS highlighted Maryland universities that offered majors in the aforementioned disciplines along with career options available after graduation. Supporters expressed appreciation for highlighting the diverse career paths along with updates on newer degree programs offered in the state. The social media campaign was launched in collaboration with summer interns, Jaila and Harvey, from the Bloomberg Arts Internship Summer Program.



Professional Outreach

Throughout the year, AEMS presented at the annual conferences of the:

- Maryland Art Education Association (MAEA),
- Maryland Dance Education Association (MDEA),
- Maryland Music Educators Association (MMEA), and
- Maryland Theater Education Association (MTEA).

Presentations included information and resources to equip educators to advocate for the arts in their schools.



42 ARTS
EDUCATORS

SURVEY OUTCOMES

100%

Agree or Strongly Agree that the information in these presentations was helpful or useful in their understanding of arts education advocacy

SESSION FEEDBACK



"I am at a middle school that hired me for PE and health. When I told them I was certified in dance as well, they were excited to be able to offer dance as an option for the first time. I learned today that the law says students should have access to all 5 arts disciplines and I am excited to be able to say I am involved in bringing dance to this school

AEMS also shared resources directly with the [Maryland State Board of Education](#) and the boards of the Maryland Associations of Elementary and Secondary School Principals. These presentations included information about policies and resources that support arts education in Maryland as well as recommendations for administrative support. We received overwhelmingly positive responses and gratitude for sharing the resources and for advocating for this critical part of every child's education.

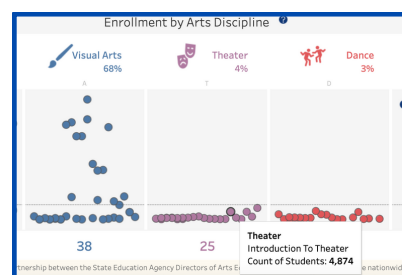
National Arts in Our Schools Month

Every March, arts educators and school communities celebrate art, dance, music, and theatre in their schools. AEMS leveraged this year's Arts in Our Schools Month to simultaneously promote and educate the public about the official release of the Maryland Arts Education Data Project at the start of April. With daily social media posts and weekly email recaps, AEMS highlighted key data points about Maryland's five arts disciplines, provided resources on navigating the data dashboards, and gave an overview of how to interpret the data that users will find.



Maryland Arts Education Data Project

On April 2, 2024 AEMS published the Maryland Arts Education Data Project on our website. Years in the making, this data tool visualizes information about arts enrollment, access, staffing, and course offerings in Maryland's public schools.



In FY24, the data dashboards (updated annually) displayed information from school years 2018 - 19 through 2021 - 22. Building up to this launch, over the course of March 2024's National Arts in Our Schools Month, AEMS produced numerous resources and navigation tutorials to facilitate use of this powerful tool for advocacy. AEMS also incorporated data from the dashboard into its advocacy during the 2024 school budgeting season and pinpointed inconsistencies within the dashboards to continually improve the accuracy of what is publicly displayed.

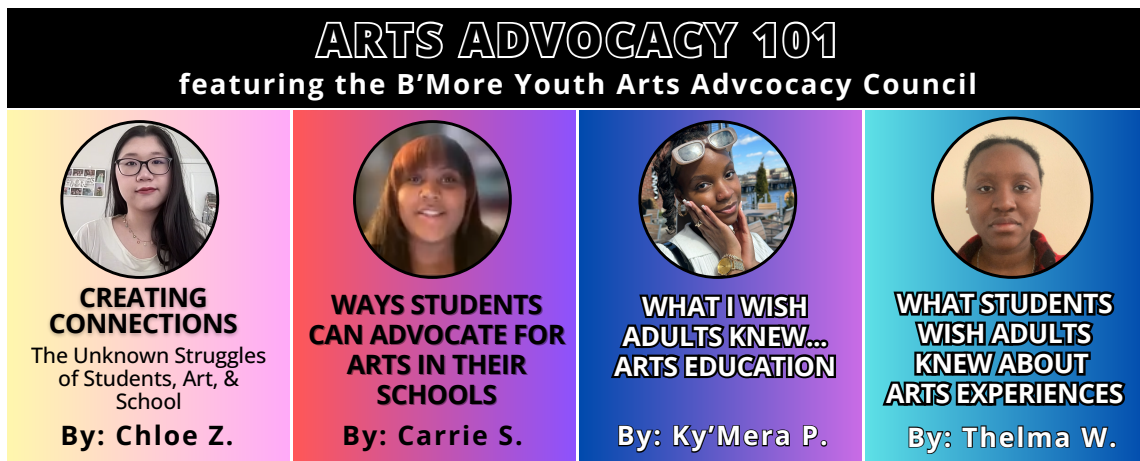
Access the Maryland Arts Education Data Project [here](#).

Arts Educator Feedback Survey

AEMS has collected arts educator feedback and input since 2019 that informs our activities and elevates the state of arts education in Maryland's schools to key stakeholders. This has evolved from arts educator in-person and virtual convenings to the dissemination of a survey that collects arts educators' identified successes, struggles, perceptions of structural issues, and outlook for their school community's futures. AEMS distributed this year's survey in the fall of 2023 and again in the spring of 2024. More than 250 arts educators responded to this survey from 19 of Maryland's 24 school systems. Information from this survey has been reported to the Maryland State Board of Education at our annual stakeholder engagement presentation and will continue to inform AEMS' advocacy and activities. The high-level results of this survey can be found [here](#).

Arts Advocacy 101 Series

The AEMS Arts Advocacy 101 series is dedicated to empowering students, families, educators, and the community to effectively advocate for arts education in Maryland schools. From October 2023 to January 2024, AEMS released four new episodes, featuring Baltimore City Public Schools students who are members of the Baltimore Youth Arts Advocacy Council which is organized by Arts Every Day.



Watch the latest [Arts Advocacy 101](#) episodes here.

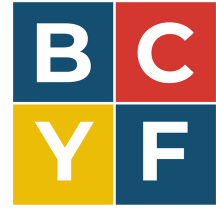
Higher Education in the Arts Task Force (HEAT Force)

The [HEAT Force](#) is composed of arts educators from institutes of higher education across the state. This group convened tri-annually to discuss alignment between PK-12 and post-secondary arts education, including teacher training and major policy shifts.

FISCAL AGENCY

Baltimore Children & Youth Fund: #bcreds

AEMS is serving as the fiscal sponsor for the Baltimore Children & Youth Fund (BCYF) in the development of their #bcreds program. BCYF is a nonprofit organization stewarding public funds to ensure our children and youth are healthy, ready to succeed in school and live in stable, safe and supportive families and communities. #BCreds will be an online platform that offers free learning modules to Baltimore-based nonprofit employees to increase the professional training available to Baltimore nonprofits. This will be a highly valuable tool for arts nonprofits in Baltimore, as many teaching artists and arts nonprofit employees come to their work first through their passion for the arts, rather than through a path with rigorous training in nonprofit administration.



Maryland Public High School Dance Showcase

Since 2011, AEMS has been the fiscal sponsor for the Maryland Public High School Dance Showcase (MPHSDS), which elevates excellence in public school dance education in Maryland. High school students who have submitted audition materials attend a full day of masterclasses, share with other dancers from around the state, and are exposed to college and university dance programs in Maryland.



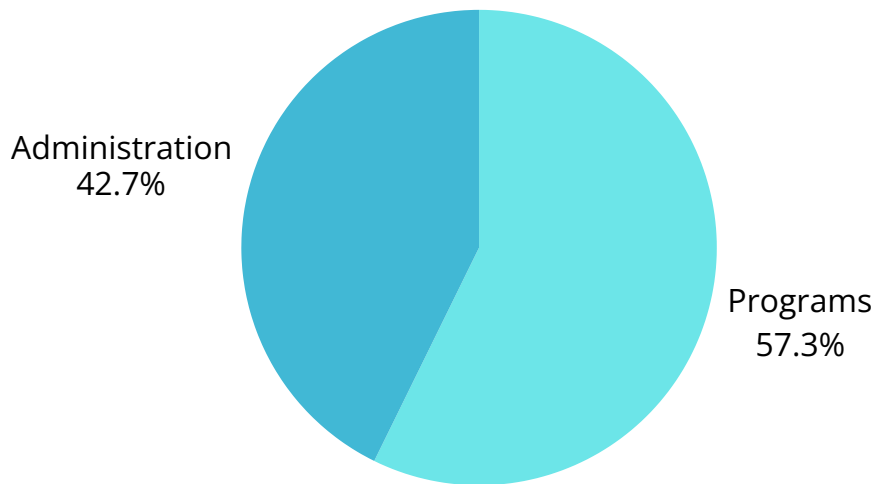
The showcase also provides the opportunity to celebrate student achievement with the presentation of the All-State Dance Awards and the Showcase Award for Professionalism and Performance. The Showcase is organized each year by a voluntary Planning Committee and Advisory Council. In the 2024 Showcase, over 400 students from over 30 schools in 10 counties participated.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

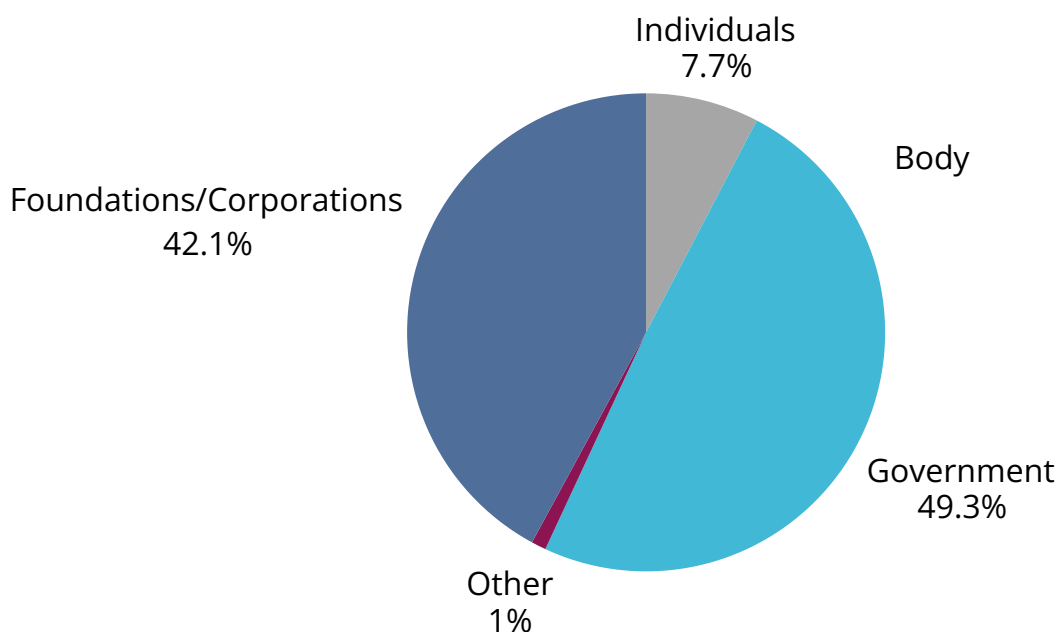
Income and Expenses Overview

Our fundraising efforts allow AEMS to provide resources and support to the arts education ecosystem at no cost to educators and the public. Our advocacy is now more critical than ever as changes come through the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. With an FY24 operating budget of just under \$850,000 AEMS was able to continue investing in the high quality work undertaken by our staff thanks to support from government, foundations, and individual donors. We are grateful for everyone who contributed their time, treasure, and talents to our mission this past year.

EXPENSES



CONTRIBUTIONS & GRANTS BREAKDOWN



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS CONT.

Donor Acknowledgments

Thank you to our generous supporters! Your financial contribution is an investment in our children. Every child in Maryland will have a better chance at receiving the arts education they deserve because of your donation.

Institutional donors (\$10K+)

- Baltimore Children and Youth Fund
- Maryland State Department of Education
- Maryland State Arts Council
- Clayton Baker Trust
- Abell Foundation
- Lockhart Vaughan Foundation
- Patricia & Mark Joseph, The Shelter Foundation

Institutional donors (\$1K-9,999)

- Exelon Foundation
- Macht Philanthropic Fund
- Joseph and Harvey Meyerhoff Charitable Funds
- Earl and Darielle Linehan Donor Advised Fund
- Baltimore Community Foundation
- The Sana and Andy Brooks Family Fund
- Harry L. Gladding Foundation

Individual Donors (\$1,000+)

- Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker
- George Roche
- Mary Ann Mears and Robert Embry
- Brian Sullam
- Veronica Thomas
- Kristin Cox
- The Magsamen / Hukanir Family Fund
- Dan & Carla McGrain
- Sheila R. Gibbs

Donor Acknowledgments

Sustainers (\$500-999)

- Jane Coffey
- Anita Lambert
- Denise Wade
- Michelle Feit
- Sara Edelsburg & Adam Aviv
- Dr. Frank C. Marino Foundation
- The Amy Schuerholz Metz Memorial Fund for Charitable Giving
- Scribner & Mary Jo Messenger

Supporters (\$250-499)

- Christen Cromwell
- Baltimore Family Alliance
- Alexander Baer
- Walter Horan
- Kathy O'Dell
- Karen Carroll
- Ashley Monroe
- Rachel McGrain

Friends (\$100-249)

- | | |
|--|--|
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|--|--|

Donor Acknowledgments

Grassroots (\$1-99)

- Andrew Kent
- James Campbell & Regina Anderson
- Patricia McCann
- Robert Miller
- Nanette & Irvin Greif
- Judy Gerstenblith
- Elizabeth Grimaldis
- Christopher Yates
- Alison Cohen
- Kimby Josephson
- Emily Sheil
- Lenore Blank Kelner



Arts Education in
Maryland Schools

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