



Dear Mayor Wheeler, City Commissioners, and members of the Arts Education and Access Committee,

On Tuesday, we shared bad news with our community: [next school year's budget will include \\$15 million in cuts spread across our 86 schools](#). At this point in our process, we have made broad decisions based on our [strategic plan](#), [community vision](#), and the [Board's goals](#), and those have materialized in individual school reports that went to principals on Monday, February 12.

We are so short on revenue that arts programming is not immune from adjustments. In the coming weeks, you will likely hear about this from families, educators, and advocates. We therefore want to be clear about what we're planning for at this point in time.

Currently, each school is allocated arts educators in increments of 0.5 FTE; next year, each school will be allocated arts educators in increments of 0.2 FTE. Each day of the week represents 0.2 FTE for any of our staff, so this may mean that arts educators who have been at just one school will now work at multiple schools over the course of a week.

For 85-90% of our students, access to the arts will not change. Currently, the 0.5 FTE allocation ensures students have at least 90 minutes of arts education each week. As we shift to 0.2 FTE allocations, students will still receive at least 90 minutes of arts education each week. At some schools, principals have used discretionary funds to purchase *more* minutes each week for their students – and those are the students who may see a reduction. Students will not fall below 90 minutes each week, but cuts to discretionary spending might make it challenging for any principal to add additional time above 90 minutes.

As a district, we are serving fewer students. This FTE change reflects that decline: we do not need as much arts FTE to serve our students. Every year, some educators retire or leave the district, so there is a natural reduction in FTE every year. We therefore will not know if Portland Public Schools will be employing fewer arts educators for some months to come, but we are happy to update you as the staffing process unfolds.

We continue to believe that no education is complete without arts education, and we share our community's commitment to providing it. Thank you for your partnership, and please let us know if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

Lisa Merrick

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