

# NEW YORK CITY ARTS IN EDUCATION CANDIDATE SURVEY PROJECT

## Manhattan Borough President Candidates

*The following questions are designed to determine candidates' positions on a number of issues related to the delivery of arts education (including music, dance, theater and visual arts) in New York City public schools. Questionnaires are being delivered to all certified candidates for the Office of Brooklyn Borough President. Responses will be posted at [www.nycartsed.com](http://www.nycartsed.com), on participating organizations' websites, and provided to constituents, the public and press. Your participation is greatly appreciated.*

**Candidate Name: Jessica Lapin**

Date: 6/14/2013

### **1. What meaningful experiences, if any, with the arts, either in school or otherwise, did you have in your life and what did you gain from these experiences?**

When I was growing up, my family made a real effort to expose me to dance, music, art, and theater. We'd go to the Joyce Theater, to the Museum of Natural History – to free Philharmonic concerts in the park. That had an incredibly positive impact on me, which is why when I graduated from Stuyvesant High School, I was in awe that our graduation ceremonies were held at Lincoln Center. I still am in awe of the sheer number of arts activities and institutions this great city has to offer.

Now that I'm raising my sons here, and the older one is in public school, I want to ensure that all our children are enriched and inspired by the arts. I was very honored to have received the Champions of Arts Education Award from The Center of Arts Education for my work in this arena.

I have long advocated for greater arts education because I have seen, firsthand, how they can turn a shy student into a ham or a struggling student into a star. The arts can build a lifelong love of school and learning and, as the science shows, can change critical outcomes. It did for me and should for future generations of New Yorkers.

### **2. It is widely acknowledged that access to a well-rounded curriculum is a key component of a quality education. However, numerous studies show that over the past decade disciplines such as art, science, and social studies are getting crowded out of the school day. In New York City, for instance, only half of all elementary schools are providing the arts instruction that is outlined in state education law. What strategies do you envision for broadening the school-day curriculum?**

As a City Council Member, and as a mother of a public school child, I've been a strong proponent of enhancing arts education in our schools. A rich arts curriculum can prepare students to become the entrepreneurs and innovators of tomorrow, by developing critical thinking skills and broadening their worldviews.

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Hiring more certified art teachers is an important part of broadening the school-day curriculum. I introduced a City Council resolution calling on the New York City Department of Education (DOE) to require that each school have a minimum of one certified arts teacher on staff, and to support and expand approaches that enable small public high schools to meet this requirement.

The state should also assess which schools are not in compliance with state arts education requirements. I wrote a measure calling on the New York State Education Commissioner to conduct a statewide audit of compliance for arts instruction and to establish a remediation process for schools that are not in compliance.

In addition, we should support cultural institutions that partner with schools. I've secured city funding for Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education, the National Dance Institute, Arts Connection and other groups to work with schools, and I will continue to support and expand these programs as Manhattan Borough President.

**3. How, if at all, would you envision restructuring the current system of school governance? How might this impact the delivery of arts instruction in city schools?**

I support a school governance system that allows for 1) high levels of meaningful parental and community involvement 2) clear lines of accountability across the system and 3) authority to implement policies and reforms, even if they are not initially popular.

I envision restructuring the system in three ways. First, members of the Panel for Educational Policy should be appointed to fixed two-year terms. As it currently stands, PEP members serve at the pleasure of the Mayor and can be removed at any time – or prior to any vote on which they disagree with the mayor. PEP members have to have some measure of independence and be allowed to vote their conscience without fear of removal. Second, there needs to be an increase in the mid-level authority of the community superintendents and community education councils. Under the current structure, the superintendents and CECs don't have any real authority. All of the real decision-making abilities are centralized in Tweed, far removed from community input. Third, we should increase community involvement in electing community education council members. Currently, CEC members are elected by select officers in the PTAs of the schools in the district. I believe that if parents are empowered in our city's education system, it will increase the emphasis on art and other meaningful programs in our schools.

**4. The arts are recognized as a core subject area here in New York and at the federal level. However, while many schools in New York City do provide quality arts instruction, access to this instruction is far from universal. How best can the city ensure equity in the delivery of arts education in the following key areas:**

**A. Funding: Principals consistently cite budget constraints as the chief obstacle to providing arts education at their schools. While schools receive “Supplemental Arts Funding” each year (formerly known as Project Arts), as of 2007 principals are not required to spend these funds directly on arts education. How can the city ensure that every school in the city has the resources to provide every student with a quality education that includes the arts?**

Supplemental Arts Funding is supposed to provide resources for arts education, and the DOE should require principals to use the money for that purpose. City funding for children’s arts programs should also be a priority. In the City Council, I’ve secured city funding for schools to have dance, theater, and other art programs in the classroom. As Manhattan Borough President I will work with local Council Members and communities to ensure that schools throughout the borough have resources to provide arts education.

**B. Qualified Instructors: Highly qualified certified arts teachers are the cornerstone of quality arts programs in schools. However, whether due to budget constraints, school size, or other factors, almost 20% of city schools have no certified arts instructor on staff. How can the city ensure that all of our public school students receive instruction from qualified arts instructors?**

The New York City Department of Education should require that each school have a minimum of one certified arts teacher on staff, and support and expand approaches that enable small public high schools to meet this requirement, and I’ve introduced a resolution in the City Council urging the DOE to implement this policy.

**C. Space: Lack of available in-school arts space is one of the top challenges principals face in implementing arts education. What policies would you propose to prevent the loss of arts spaces in public schools due to overcrowding, co-location, or other factors?**

Lack of available classroom space has been huge challenge in Manhattan for many years.

Since I took office, I’ve worked closely with parents and other elected officials to bring 5 new public schools to the East Side. Many of the new buildings include large spaces for arts instruction. I also walked around the neighborhood with parents to identify new school space, and participated a “War Room” for elected officials to address the overcrowding issue on a continuous basis. As Borough President I would continue the War Room model throughout Manhattan, to ensure that the DOE is accurately identifying and planning for school space in every neighborhood.

**D. Partnerships: New York City has a rich array of cultural resources, including arts and cultural institutions and professional artists that play an important role in the lives and education of some of our school children. How can the city ensure that all public school students and their families enjoy meaningful engagement with these resources?**

Students should benefit from living in New York, the arts capital of the world. I’ve secured funding for programs that connect students with these cultural gems, including Lincoln Center, the National Dance Institute, and the York Theater Company. We need to expand these partnerships throughout

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the city. As Borough President, I will work with communities throughout Manhattan to identify areas where programs are needed, and provide support to facilitate these cultural connections. I will also advocate for the Department of Education and Department of Cultural Affairs to work together and create a comprehensive plan for expanding partnerships between cultural institutions and schools throughout the city.

**5. The city's accountability system places a heavy emphasis on student performance on state assessments in English language arts and math. Currently, performance assessments for the arts are being piloted in city schools and while the arts can potentially factor into a high school's report card grade, the overall impact is minimal. Are there ways you would propose the city expand or revise the school accountability system to incorporate the arts?**

Currently, school assessments place too much emphasis on high-stakes testing that doesn't evaluate the whole educational experience of a child, including the arts. The arts should be a meaningful part of school assessments. This will give parents and students a more accurate picture of how schools are serving students.

**6. How would you engage teachers, parents, the arts and cultural community, city agencies, and other interested stakeholders to expand access to arts education both in-school and outside of the school day?**

Based on the "War Room" model that we've used to address overcrowding, I would bring together educators, parent leaders, the Department of Education and the Department of Cultural Affairs to create strategies for expanding arts programs in our schools. I also host an annual East Side Children's Art Show, where hundreds of students from schools throughout my Council District can showcase their art. I would expand the art show throughout Manhattan to get parents, kids and communities involved in the arts.

**Additional Comments:**

No additional comments.