

Written Testimony - Agenda Item 806

Agenda Item	Name or Organization	Position	Comments	Attachment	Created
806	AEAF Oversight Committee	Support	Written copy of invited testimony for AEAF Oversight Committee Chairs	Yes	09/26/23 5:09 PM



To: Mayor Ted Wheeler and the Members of the Portland City Council

From: Laura Streib, AEF AOC Committee Chair 2019-2022

CC: Jenn Falco, AEF AOC Committee Chair

Date: 26 September 2023

Re: Invited Testimony for Item #806 Accept 2018-2022 Arts Education and Access Fund...

Comments: I will be at this session to give summary testimony as an invited participant, I am also providing a copy of my remarks for the record.

My name is Laura Streib. I was a committee member on the AOC from 2017 until the end of 2022 and was the chair from 2019 until I termed off at the end of 2022. I have been a passionate arts advocate starting my own non-profit specifically focused on arts and education in the schools in 2007 and have been invested in the arts tax since it was a ballot initiative. Bottom line: I have sixteen years of experience in the arts education world.

In my role as chair of the AOC I worked to get us on a calendar and consistent basis for reporting, so that our reports would be submitted closer to the end of each school year enabling council to hear our recommendations and implement them on a more real-time basis, before the next school year. We put qualitative and quantitative reporting standards in place so that we could provide both hard data and more personal accounts about the fund's impact.

In addition, I worked to advocate for the committee having a seat at the table in key decisions related to the AEF Fund. I recruited an entire new committee during the pandemic. Because of COVID, our committee fell below its minimum and I was able to do public recruitment and staff the committee with 19 people.

In our last report which covers academic years 20/21 and 21/22 we show that the AEF Fund supports over 32,000 children at 87 Portland-area schools with combined AEF and district funding 108 FTE certified arts educators. This is a significant improvement over where we were back in 2012 when the initiative was first passed by voters and there was only one certified arts teacher for every 997 students in the city. Today that ratio is 1:323.

While the Fund is working as the voters intended, the committee believes it can work even better to provide quality arts education and access to Portland's children and residents by updating the IGAs between the city and the school districts, for example clarifying the count of teachers vs. FTEs and implementing enhanced reporting requirements, including clear expectations for the on-time data submission. We recommend requiring that each district and school report a per teacher student ratio to ensure that both full and part-time arts teachers can provide high quality arts education, consistent with the voters' intent in funding one certified arts education per 500 students.

The AEF has a new logo. Our committee, with the help of RACC and Commissioner Rubio's team, led a logo contest with community collaboration at its core. The winner was a young student from Rose City Park elementary school. This logo should be reflected in all of the places where the AEF plays a role to highlight the fact that the AEF is working for our community.



To: Mayor Ted Wheeler and the Members of the Portland City Council

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Comments: I will be at this session to give summary testimony as an invited participant, I am also providing a copy of my remarks for the record.

My name is Jenn Falco. I noticed a posting for the AEAF Citizen Oversight committee in the Hollywood Star news in 2021, joined the committee and took over as the Chair when Laura termed off at the end of 2022. I am a proud East side resident, former Theater major and PPS mom. Bottom line: The arts are personal to me, and to my son.

Over the past year, the AOC has continued to focus on our Job 1: efficiency and accountability to meet the intent of Portland voters – certified arts educators providing high-quality arts education based on K-5 enrollment, with a maximum student teacher ratio of 1 teacher to 500 students as well as grants that provide high-quality arts access for K-12 students and make arts and culture experiences available to our underserved communities.

What have we accomplished?

1. We have completed a review of contracts related to the AEAF and have urged the City to update them to better codify voter requirements.
2. We are partnering with the City's new education coordinator to enhance school data collection and the timeliness of reporting moving forward, gaining some of the increased detail Laura mentioned. I can't stress enough how having our committee staffed has made a difference in our ability to make and maintain forward progress and avoid snafus like submitting multiple annual reports to the City which appear on the City website but have never been formally received by Council until today.
3. We have commissioned a subcommittee to assess grants reporting to make sure grant program requirements, and the City's future RFP, clearly reflect the goals of the AEAF for K-12 arts education and access for underserved communities.
4. We have worked with the City to put updated committee bylaws in place.
5. We are continuing to recruit committee members to represent Portland's diverse communities, as well as strengthening our committee's focus on inclusion and equity. In fact, recruitment is ongoing right now – if you, or someone you know, might be a fit for our Oversight Committee I want to encourage you to apply via the link at portland.gov before 16 October.

Looking forward, we are already working with the AEAF coordinator and Arts Manager on crafting the foundation of the 22/23 AOC report, with a goal of finishing our committee's work before the end of the calendar year.

We are here today for all of Portland's children, and for those communities who have not traditionally had access to one of life's greatest joys. While it has, at times, been difficult given the volume of day-to-day responsibilities of this

Oversight group, especially for the Chairs of recent years, I want to thank Commissioner Ryan for reminding us that art is part of what makes Portland, Portland, City Arts for its partnership with the bylaws, contracts and reporting, Revenue for its often underacknowledged work with collections and financial reporting, and the TSCC for its guidance about citizen oversight best practices.

I also want to acknowledge the members of the AOC who are not speaking today and the AEAF's partners in both the six Portland-area school districts and at RACC. This work matters greatly.

Why does our work matter greatly?

Because recent research in Houston shows that elementary school students “who had increased arts education experiences saw improvements in writing achievement, emotional and cognitive empathy, school engagement and higher education aspirations, while they had a lower incidence of disciplinary infractions.” (The New York Times, 2 May 2023, “The Mind-Expanding Value of Arts Education.”) Another finding about the value of arts education, based on a study with kids in largely Title 1 schools, “In a recent study of New York City schoolchildren conducted by the New Victory Theater, children who watched and participated in performing arts over a multiyear period were more creative and hopeful than peers who did not.” (The New York Times, 20 August 2023 “Grown Up Theater Kids Run the World.”) Simply put, arts education gives kids measurable skills for life, whether they become working artists or not.

In partnership for kids and arts access. Thank you.
