



# 2022 AGENDA

## **Welcome from Asia Society**

Jennifer Kapral, Asia Society Texas

## **State of the Arts in Education**

Deborah Lugo, Arts Connect Houston

## **People First Language**

Alisa Magallón, Houston Grand Opera

## **In Conversation**

Janette Garza Lindner, Veritas  
Harrison Guy, Fifth Ward CRC

## **Seeing the Impact of the Arts Through Data**

Dr. Daniel H. Bowen, Texas A&M University

## **A Case Study**

Rachel Hemphill Dickson & Ronnie Mason,  
The Ensemble Theatre

## **The Big Picture**

Dr. Erin Baumgartner, Kinder Institute's HERC

## **Break**

## **Through the eyes of a poet**

Ariana Lee, Meta-Four Houston

## **Panel Discussion: Impact of Arts on the experience of students with differing abilities**

Moderator:  
Wes Holloway, Corcoran School at Washington University  
Panelists:  
Superintendent Millard House II, Houston ISD  
Angel Ponce, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities  
Mireille Patman, Houston Ballet & Houston ISD Parent

## **2022 Champion in the Arts Awards Presentations**

2022 Champion in Education Award Honoree  
**Margo Hickman, Jack Yates High School**  
Presented by Jared Berry, Houston ISD

2022 Champion in the Arts,  
Lifetime Achievement Honoree

**Alice Valdez, MECA**  
Presented by Necole Irvin, Houston MOCA

## **The Future of Fine Arts in Houston ISD**

Dr. Rick Cruz, Houston ISD  
Wenden Sanders, Houston ISD

## **Ways to Engage**

Judy Nyquist & Jack McBride, ACH Board Members

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## 2022 State of the Arts in Education Task Force

Lauren Anderson, Houston Ballet

Dr. Erin Baumgartner, Kinder Institute's Houston Education Research Consortium

Dawn Blitz, Dawn Blitz Consulting

Epi Chaad, Arts Connect Houston

Zachary Gresham, Arts in Medicine Program, The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center

Sanja Korman, Dance Curriculum Specialist, HISD Fine Arts Department

Erin McClarty, Erin McClarty PLLC

Deborah McNulty, Arts & Culture Leader

Judy Nyquist, Arts Connect Board Member

Wenden Sanders, HISD Fine Arts Department

## Asia Society Texas

Special thanks goes to Asia Society Texas, Arts & Culture partner since 2020 and the gracious hosts of this year's event.

## Student Leaders

Arts Connect Houston would like to recognize three remarkable student leaders who have contributed to the State of the Arts in Education. Kayla Colen & Amber Jones graciously serve as hosts and emcees. Ariana Lee has composed a poem that she will perform during the event. We are so grateful for their input and energy.

## Student Artwork Exhibition

Thank you to the student artists who created the 50 pieces of art showcased today and the educators who guided them in their process. A special thank you to Chandel Bonner-Hancock and Rickey Polidore, HISD Visual Arts Curriculum Specialists, for their support in making all of this possible.

## Thank you to our 2022 event supporters!



Janette Garza Lindner  
& Fred Lindner

Art Connectors  
Sonja Bruzauskas  
& Houston Haymon

Deborah McNulty

# OUR HISTORY

Arts Connect Houston's work began in 2015 when a group of local leaders in Houston identified a lack of equitable arts education in Houston ISD. We knew that we could accomplish more change together than as individuals and decided to form a collective impact organization that would amplify and strengthen our voices and power. Today, we are a collective of more than 90 institutions collaborating to realize the tremendous potential of every student by ensuring arts access as an essential part of a complete education.

Arts Connect unites the Greater Houston community to ensure access to high-quality arts education in creative writing, dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts for every student, beginning with Houston ISD. We accomplish our mission by collecting actionable data, driving advocacy, building capacity, and unlocking new investments.

Over the past seven years, we have worked as a collective community to expand access to the arts for students. Since 2018, we have invested close to \$1 million in 396 partnerships through the Arts Action Fund, reaching over 90,000 students in Houston ISD. This year, the arts will be a key part of the work done at RISE Transformation Schools, campuses designated as the lowest performing in our district. We are also doubling the number of schools in our Creative Schools Institute for the 2022-23 school year, supporting these campuses' continuous commitment to growth in the arts. Arts Connect will also continue our commitment to creating and supporting spaces for shared learning and collective advancement, creating learning opportunities and resources for Arts & Culture Partners, educators, and Houston ISD administrators.

We are immensely proud of the work we have accomplished together and look forward to continuing to identify and fill gaps in arts education for our learners, recognizing that when students prosper, our community thrives.

# OUR PARTNERS

Over 90 partners make up Arts Connect Houston's collective, including Houston ISD, local arts and culture organizations, funders, and the community.

## Arts & Culture Partners

A.I.R. Project  
Ad Deum Dance Company  
A.D. Players @ The George Theater  
AFA  
Alley Theatre  
Alta Arts  
Aperio, Music of the Americas  
Apollo Chamber Players  
Ars Lyrica  
Art League Houston  
ARTreach  
Arte Público Press  
Asia Society Texas Center  
Aurora Picture Show  
Bay Area Houston Ballet & Theatre  
Blaffer Art Museum  
Campbell Learning Center  
Carya String Quarter  
Community Artists' Collective  
Community Music Center of Houston  
Contemporary Arts Museum Houston  
Culture Arts Initiative, Inc.  
Da Camera of Houston  
Dance the Dream  
Diversity in the Arts & Entertainment  
Edison Arts Foundation  
EnActe Arts Inc.  
The Ensemble Theatre  
Exalted Arts  
Express Children's Theatre  
Fashion Museum of Texas  
Foundation for Modern Music  
FotoFest Inc.  
Frame Dance Productions  
Friends of Africa  
Harris County Cultural Arts Council  
Hearts in Motion  
Heritage Society  
HITS Theatre  
The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts  
Holocaust Museum Houston  
Hope Stone  
Houston Ballet  
Houston Boychoir  
District  
Houston Independent School District  
Houston Center for Photography  
Houston Contemporary Dance Company  
Houston Chamber Choir  
Houston Center for Contemporary Craft  
Houston Children's Chorus  
Houston Grand Opera  
Houston Healthy Hip-Hop  
Houston Masterworks Chorus  
Houston Metropolitan Dance Center  
Houston School of Arts and Design  
Houston Symphony  
Houston Viola Society  
Houston Youth Symphony  
Kinetic Ensemble

# OUR PARTNERS

## Arts & Culture Partners (cont.)

Loop38	Rising Stars Academy of Dance & Performing Arts
Mad About Hula Hoops	Rothko Chapel
Main Street Theater	Segundo Barrio Children's Chorus
MECA	Silambam Houston
MECKKA Dance Project	Social Movement Contemporary Dance
Mercury Chamber Orchestra	Take the Stage
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston	Texan French Alliance for the Arts
Musiqqa	Theatre Under the Stars
Nameless Sound	The Printing Museum
Nia's Daughter Movement Collective	University of Houston Public Art
Open Dance Project	Urban Souls Dance Company
Opera in the Heights	WindSync
Orange Show Center for Visionary Arts	Workshop Houston
Partnerschools	Writers in the Schools
Performing Arts Houston	UNICEF USA
Prelude Music Foundation	

### City of Houston

Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs  
Mayor's Office of Education

### Research Partner

Arts, Humanities, & Civic Engagement Lab

### State & National Partners

Arts Education Partnership  
Ingenuity, Inc.  
The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts  
MINDPOP  
Texas Cultural Trust  
Texans for the Arts

### Funders

H-E-B  
Houston Endowment  
National Endowment for the Arts  
The Powell Foundation  
Texas Women for the Arts at Texas Cultural Trust

# OUR LEADERSHIP

## Arts Connect Houston Team

Deborah Lugo,  
Executive Director

Taylor Bush,  
Director of Strategic Initiatives

Eepi Chaad,  
Director of Partnerships & Learning

Monique Mogilka,  
Data Manager

Mandy Whited,  
Operations Manager

## Leadership Committee

Jack McBride, Chair  
Community Volunteer

John Abodeely  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Houston Arts Alliance

Cathy Bencivenga  
Executive Manager of Education  
& Community Engagement,  
Alley Theatre

Dr. Rick Cruz  
Deputy Superintendent,  
Houston ISD

Rachel Hemphill Dickson  
BOLD Associate Artistic Director,  
The Ensemble Theatre

Caroline Goeser, Immediate Past Chair  
W.T. and Louise J. Moran Chair of  
Learning and Interpretation,  
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Harrison Guy  
Director of Arts and Culture,  
Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Company  
Founder, Urban Souls Dance Company

## Board

Lauren Anderson,  
Houston Ballet

Caroline Goeser,  
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Craig Massey,  
Merrill Lynch

Jack McBride,  
Community Volunteer

Judy Nyquist,  
Community Volunteer

Janette Garza Lindner  
Director,  
Veritas Total Solutions

Deborah Lugo  
Executive Director,  
Arts Connect Houston

Alisa Magallón  
Associate Director of Programming and Engagement,  
Houston Grand Opera

Nicole Moore-Kriel  
Program Officer,  
The Powell Foundation

Eileen Morris  
Artistic Director,  
The Ensemble Theatre

Wenden Sanders  
Fine Arts Director,  
Houston ISD

# AN OVERVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE ARTS IN EDUCATION

We are grateful that so many of you have come out today in support of arts in education in Houston—whether you are here to learn, to share, or to deepen your connections within our community. Arts Connect Houston, as a collective impact organization, truly would not exist without each and every one of you. The State of the Arts in Education symposium is a celebration of the work we have done together up until this point, as well as a guide to think about the work to come. It is a space to think deeply about why we fight for the arts in education, what barriers exist to equitable arts education access for our students, and how we can both individually and collectively make changes to continue pushing for a better tomorrow.

The significant wins we have had over the years have only come about through thoughtful discussion, empathetic listening, and a deep passion for our mission. Change takes time; we plant the seeds of relationships and ideas, tend to them, and experience the results of our community-centered work much later. The State of the Arts in Education is a part of this journey; it helps us continue the conversation, moving the needle of arts education through discourse.

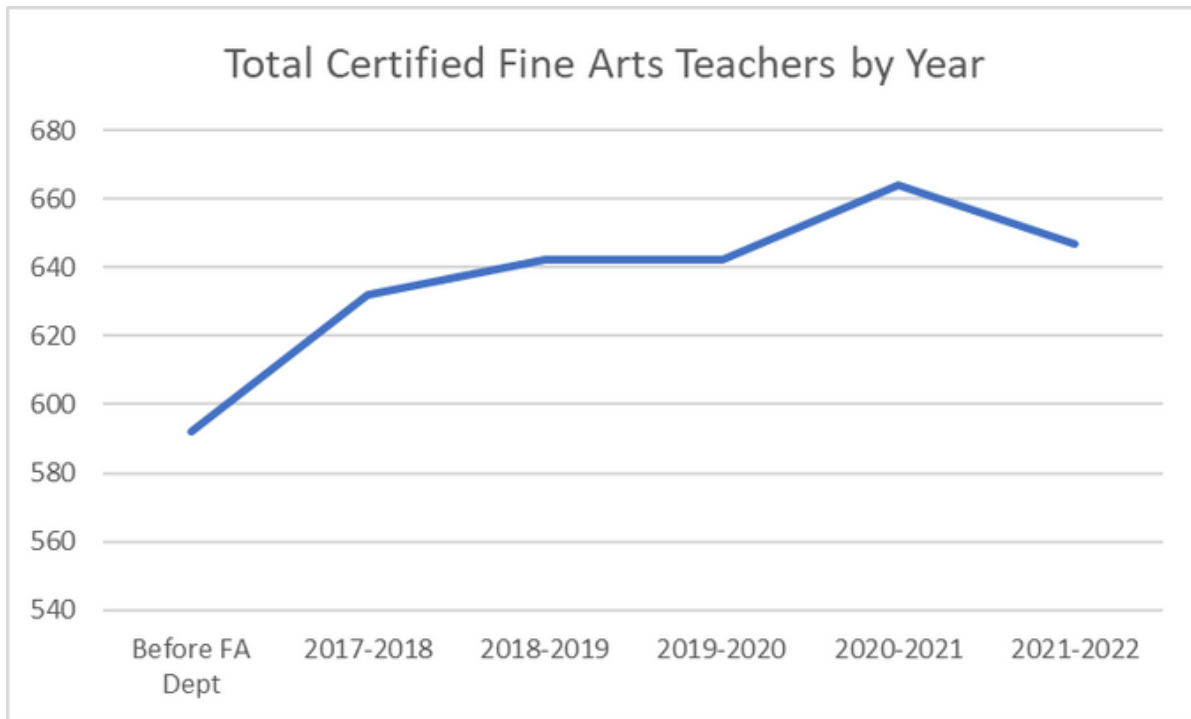
Each year, the State of the Arts in Education features a key theme that relates back to our mission of ensuring equitable arts education access for every Houston ISD student. This year, the theme is the impact of the arts on students with differing abilities. We know that not all students receive an equitable education, and this is *especially* the case for students with differing abilities. We are all aware of the value and power arts education can have; students with disabilities deserve to feel the self-expression, joy, and community arts education engenders that their peers do. Inclusive education must be a foundational standard of equity; we cannot achieve our mission unless *all* students experience the impact of a quality arts education.

Ultimately, we are here to think critically and creatively about our work. Part of the power of collective impact is that every single individual, including yourself, brings a unique perspective to the table. We are grateful that you are here today, and all other days, sharing that viewpoint and pushing us to think beyond what exists now and instead imagine what could be.

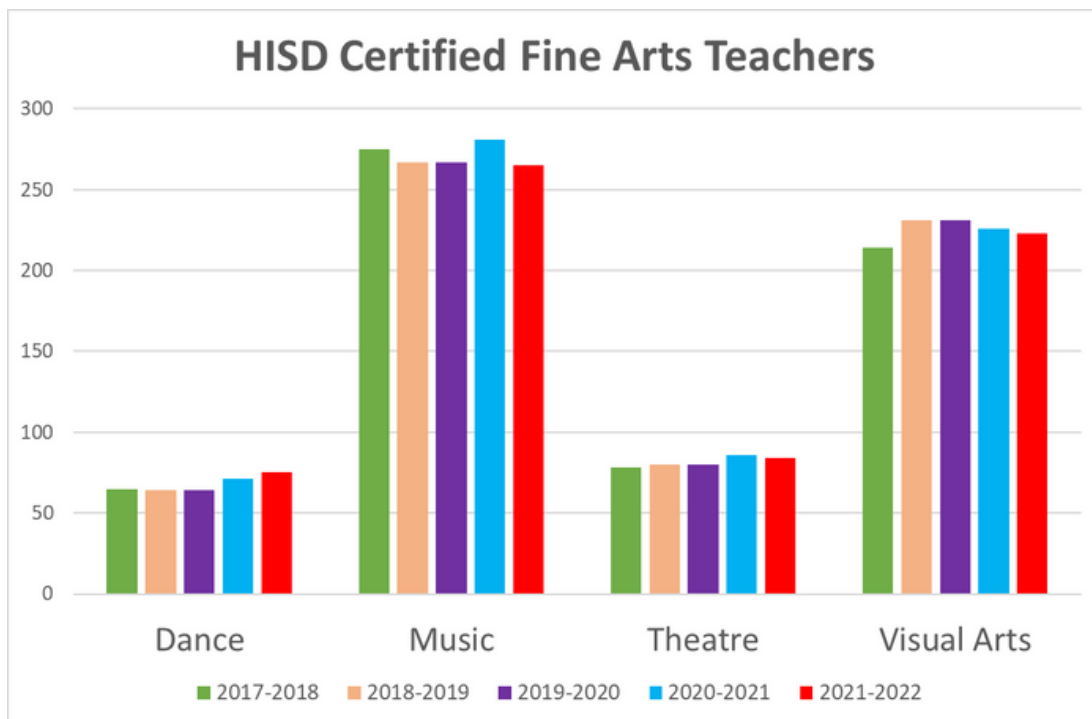


# STATE OF THE ARTS IN EDUCATION

## FINE ARTS TEACHERS



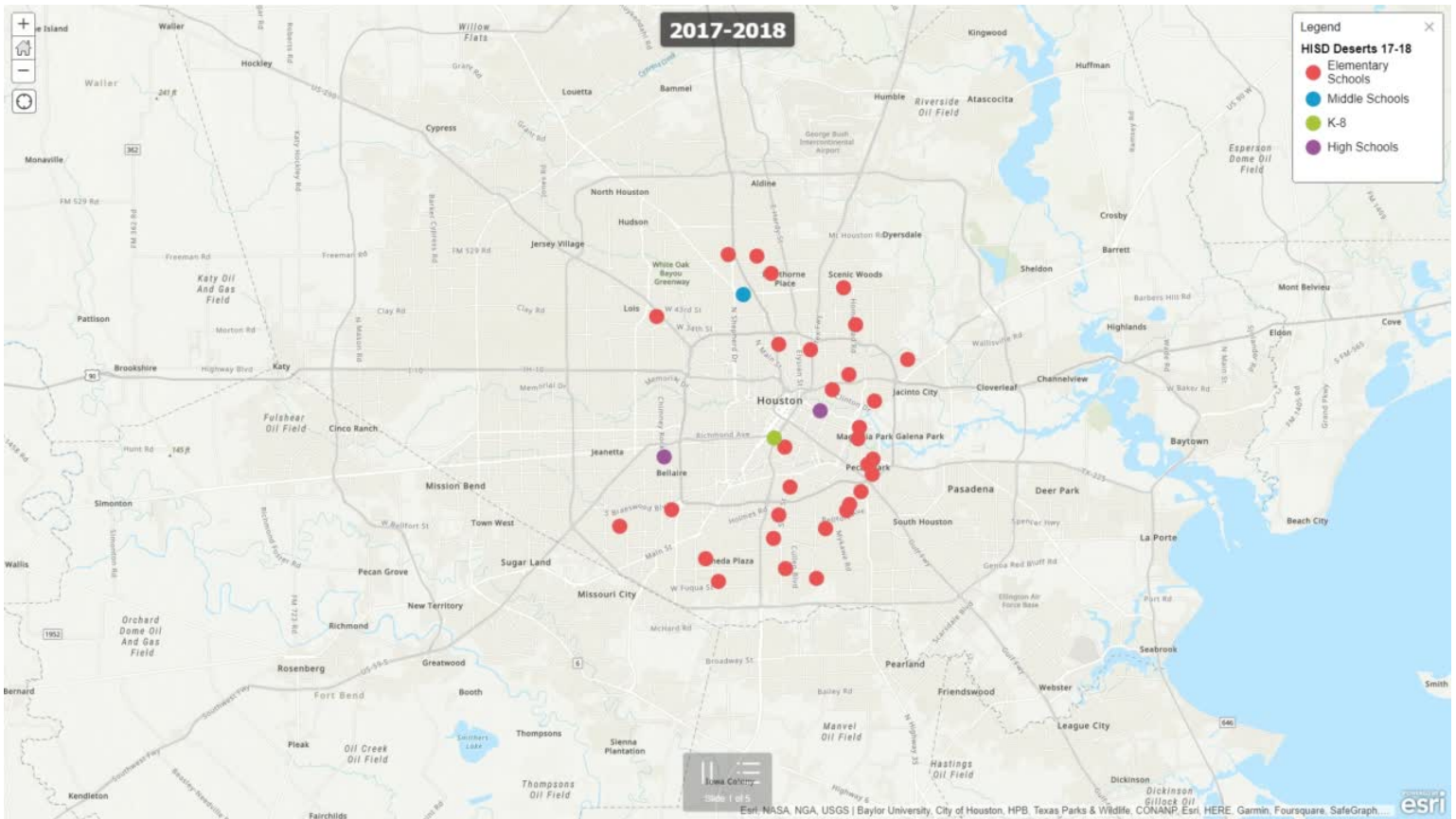
At the time the Fine Arts Department was created, there were 592 certified fine arts teachers. As of last school year, that number has grown by about 9%.



As of 2021-2022, HISD Fine Arts Department supports 664 certified Fine Arts teachers, with a student-to-fine-arts-teacher ratio of 295:1.

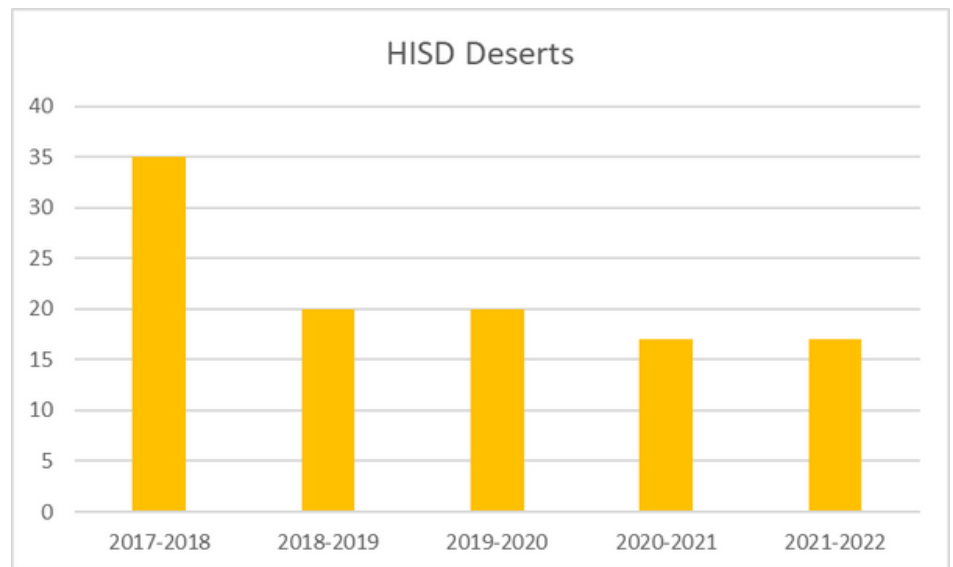
# STATE OF THE ARTS IN EDUCATION

## HISD ARTS DESERTS 2017-2022 TIMELAPSE



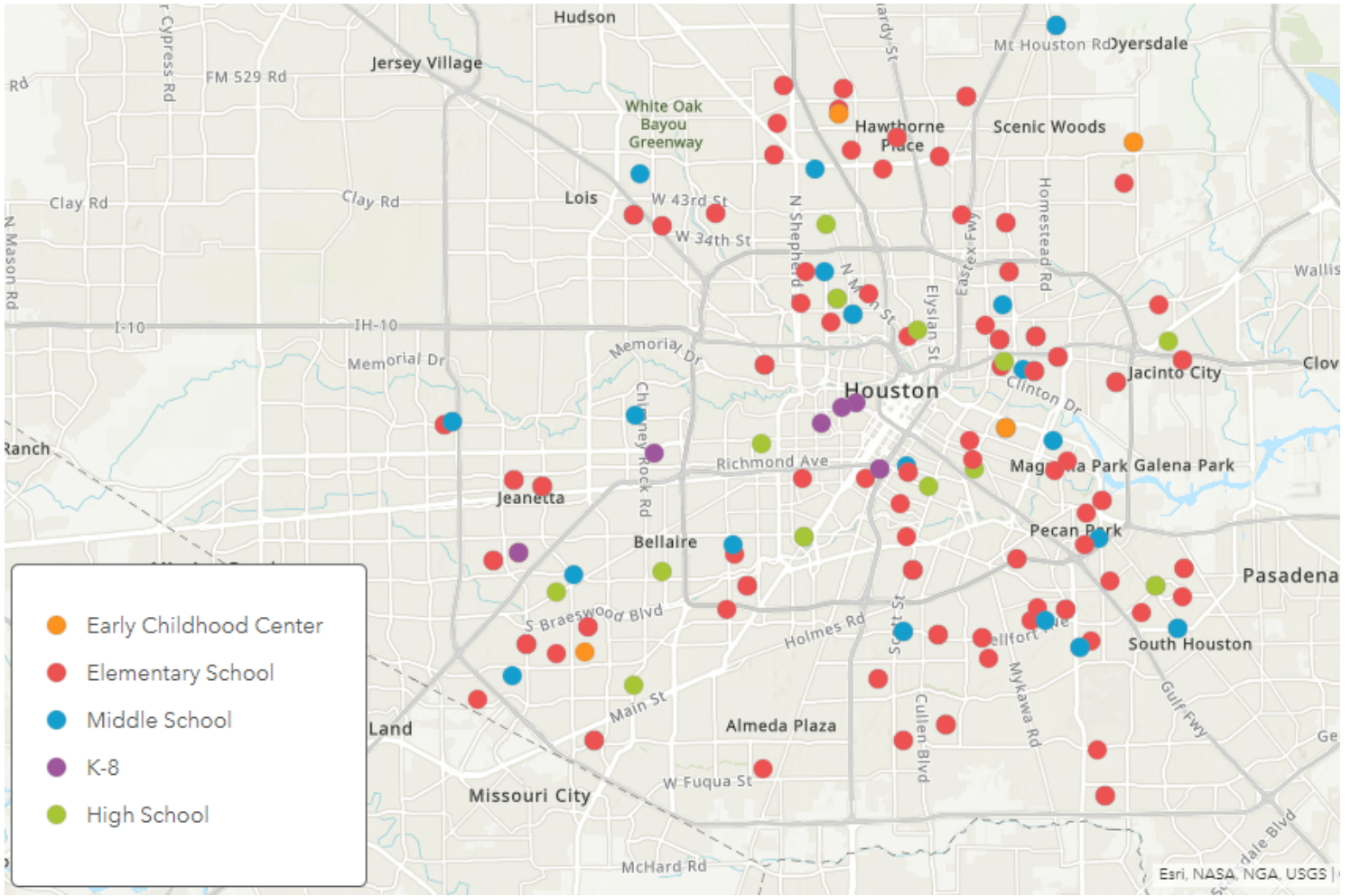
Click to view the timelapse map of campuses excluding Early Childhood Centers from 2017-2018 to 2021-2022 with 0 Fine Arts teachers.

During the 2017-18 school year, 35 K-12 campuses did not have any Fine Arts teachers. That decreased to 20 in 2018-19, and then 17 in 2020-21. While some schools have stayed consistent, the deserts have shifted in location.



Before the Fine Arts Department was created, there were 46 total campuses at the time without any fine arts instruction. We have annually decreased the number of fine arts deserts across the district, but as of last school year, there were still nearly 19,000 students throughout the district on campuses with no Fine Arts educator.

# STATE OF THE ARTS IN EDUCATION ARTS ACTION FUND



Campuses served through the Arts Action Fund since 2018, not including digital programs.

Since 2018, the Arts Action Fund has invested close to **\$1 million** across Houston ISD, supporting **396 partnerships** and impacting **90,434 students** in **2,983 classrooms**.

# 2022 STATE OF THE ARTS IN EDUCATION STUDENT EMCEES

Students are at the center of everything that the Arts Connect collective is working towards. The event this year will be hosted by two remarkable young leaders from the theatre program at Jack Yates High School.



**Kayla Colen,**  
Theatre Student,  
Yates High School

Kayla Colen is a current Senior at Jack Yates High School. Early in Kayla's life, she was drawn to being creative and to the arts. There was almost so much excitement in her little soul when she dreamed about performing. Kayla's mother enrolled her in the Young Performers Program-Ensemble Theatre (YPP) where she started to learn techniques related to performing. In her 10th grade year, Kayla was elected into the leadership role of JY Theatre Club President. Even with COVID-19, she pushed forward and was able to attend the YPP summer program via the internet. Theatre has been a saving grace in Kayla's life.



**Amber Jones,**  
Theatre Student,  
Yates High School

Amber Jones is a sophomore at Jack Yates High School who was born on March 12, 2007 in Houston, Texas. Some of the extracurricular activities Amber participates in are Cheerleading and Theatre. Amber enjoys doing both of these activities as well as singing, spending time with friends, and traveling. Some places Amber has been include Los Angeles, Atlanta, Chicago, Destin, and Belize. Amber has participated in a few plays over the course of her time doing theatre. However, she plans to show off her talents in many more! Once Amber graduates from high school, she plans to enroll at UT Austin, majoring in Chemistry, to then enroll at Baylor College of Medicine and start her journey of becoming a Pediatric Anesthesiologist.

The Asia Society fosters insight, encourages engagement, elevates regional voices, informs and educates new audiences, addresses complex – and where necessary – contentious challenges, engages in creative problem-solving, and helps deliver real solutions for the benefit of all. As a global network of centers who share a common vision, we actively collaborate with our centers and partners across Asia and the world. The Asia Society also provides its members an opportunity to become part of our global network to help shape a prosperous, sustainable, and secure future for us all.



**Jennifer Kapral,**  
Director of Education and Outreach,  
Asia Society Texas

Jennifer is the Director of Education and Outreach for Asia Society Texas Center. She has a passion for global education and wealth of experience from 15 years as a professional educator, school leader, and project manager. She has held leadership roles with Teach for America, Raise Your Hand Texas, and the Houston Independent School District. Most recently, she served as Dean of Instruction at the Houston Academy for International Studies, where she built and managed a nationally recognized study abroad program. An avid traveler, Jennifer has visited five continents and more than three-dozen countries. Highlights from her travels include leading a student service-learning trip to Pune, India and receiving a Fulbright-Hays award to study curriculum development in Egypt. Jennifer holds a B.A. in Politics and Philosophy from the University of Pittsburgh and a Master's in Education from The University of St. Thomas.

# STATE OF THE ARTS IN EDUCATION WELCOME



**Deborah Lugo,**  
Executive Director,  
Arts Connect Houston

Deborah Lugo is the Executive Director of Arts Connect Houston, a citywide collective impact organization with over 90 partners working to ensure equity of arts education and creative learning for students. Through her work, Deborah facilitates strategic alignments and opportunities in order to expand access to the arts for students throughout the Houston ISD. Deborah, originally from Puerto Rico, holds a Master in Public Policy from Princeton University and a Bachelor in Violin Performance from Florida International University. Prior to Arts Connect, Deborah was the Executive Director of Mercury Chamber Orchestra. As an education advocate and parent of two children who attend public schools, she maintains that the arts are vital for a complete and well-rounded education.

# PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

Person First language or People First Language (PFL) prioritizes the personhood of the people rather than their identity. Using Identity First Language reinforces the labels placed on individuals rather than their status as people.



**Alisa Magallón,**  
Associate Director of Programming  
and Engagement,  
Houston Grand Opera

Alisa Magallón is a farm girl turned award-winning operatic soprano and nationally recognized arts administrator. She is passionate about cultivating social and emotional learning in children and adults through the power of the arts and has led several successful education programs for prominent opera companies in the United States. Alisa obtained a BA in Music at Luther College and an MM in Vocal Performance at the Bienen School of Music, Northwestern University. She has sung with Chicago Opera Theater, Houston Grand Opera, and Minnesota Opera and her concert & recital work has taken her from the Midwest to Mexico. In 2017, she was invited by Opera America to join the Leadership Intensive cohort and is currently a member of Opera America's Teaching Artist task force, co-chair for Arts Connect Houston Equity and Justice initiative, and is the Associate Director of Programming and Engagement at Houston Grand Opera.

# IN CONVERSATION

Each person has a unique journey to becoming an artist or an appreciator of the arts. In this segment, community leaders share their journey to a commitment to arts education.



**Harrison Guy,**  
Arts Connect Leadership Committee

Harrison has captivated audiences across the nation through his inspirational and unique works of passion, beauty, and activism that are rooted in African American history & culture. He began his dance journey in the small town of La Marque, TX, and building on his love for social dance. He began to study dance at Prairie View A&M University which lead him to deeper studies at The Ailey School in New York. He was a founding member of both Exclamation Dance Company and Dorrel Martin's Dance Fusion in Houston. In 2004, he debuted his dance company Urban Souls Dance Company at the city-wide dance festival, Dance Houston. Harrison has gained a reputation for creating soul-stirring works that shift the consciousness of the audience and inspire a response. He has facilitated a cultural exchange in Kigali, Rwanda, and was commissioned to create a work at Vanderbilt University in the Spring of 2015 to honor one of America's most prominent composers, John Harbison. In 2016 he launched Houston's first African American Dance Festival and he has also founded Black Arts Movement Houston, a gathering space for local creatives. Harrison was the inaugural Artist in residence at Rice University through the CERCL Department where he is presenting a project called Black Bodies in White Spaces. He has won numerous awards which include Best Choreography for his work as Movement Director with Rec Room's presentation of The Royale. He choreographed the Little Mermaid at TUTS and is currently co-choreographing Plumshuga: The Rise of Lauren Anderson at Stages Theater alongside Houston Ballet's Stanton Welch. Mr. Guy has been teaching dance for 18 years. He has taught on the campuses of Codwell Elementary, Gregory-Lincoln Fine Arts Academy, Hamilton Middle School, and Waltrip High School and currently teaches on faculty at the Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. Harrison is the Director of Arts and Culture for the 5th Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation and the Historic DeLUXE Theater.



# IN CONVERSATION

Each person has a unique journey to becoming an artist or an appreciator of the arts. In this segment, community leaders share their journey to a commitment to arts education.



**Janette Garza Lindner,**  
Arts Connect Leadership Committee

Janette Garza Lindner is an HISD parent, a strong advocate for the local Latino community and a member of Arts Connect Houston's leadership committee since 2019. She is a director at Veritas Total Solutions, a Houston-based management consulting firm, and enjoys helping her clients solve their toughest challenges. Janette brings that passion for problem-solving to her work in our community. Her public education experience fuels her commitment to ensuring every student has access to a high-quality public education. She attended public school in Brownsville, TX, earned her bachelor's degree in Management Information Systems from the University of Texas at Austin, and has since called Houston home. In addition to her work on Arts Connect Houston's leadership committee, she is a Latinos for Education 2019 board fellow, an active member of Leadership for Educational Equity, Moms Demand Action, and efforts to improve transportation and mobility. She ran for elected office in 2021 and works to increase voter participation. She sings with the Houston Cecilia Chamber Choir and is an enthusiastic patron of our local arts and music community.

# SEEING THE IMPACT OF THE ARTS: THROUGH DATA

Our research partner shares gold-standard data on the array of impacts arts education has on Houston's diverse students.



**Dr. Daniel H. Bowen,**

Co-Director of the Arts, Humanities, & Civic Engagement Lab, Texas A&M University

Daniel Bowen Ph.D., is an Associate Professor with Texas A&M University's Department of Educational Administration & Human Resource Development and a Research Affiliate of Rice University's Houston Education Research Consortium. Dr. Bowen is the Co-Director of the Arts, Humanities, & Civic Engagement Lab, supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts and dedicated to assessing policy-relevant research questions through rigorous investigations of the role of the arts and humanities in promoting student success, social and emotional well-being, and civic engagement. His research has been published in peer-reviewed academic journals, such as the *Journal of Policy Analysis & Management*, *Educational Researcher*, *Sociology of Education*, and the *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*; featured in *The New York Times*, *NBC Nightly News*, *CNN*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Atlantic*, *Education Week*; and has been designated by the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse as meeting its highest research standards. In addition to the National Endowment for the Arts, his research has been supported by the Spencer Foundation, Houston Endowment, and Boniuk Institute.

# SEEING THE IMPACT OF THE ARTS: A CASE STUDY

A innovative and collaborative program between The Ensemble Theatre and Westbury High School that served students living with disabilities will be explored during this case study.



**Rachel Hemphill Dickson,**  
BOLD Associate Artistic Director,  
The Ensemble Theatre

Rachel Hemphill Dickson secured a Bachelor of Science in Engineering, an MFA in acting at University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign and Master of Social Work at University of Houston. She has taught everything from math to theatre to the K-12 population and at various universities. She currently serves as the BOLD Associate Artistic Director at The Ensemble Theatre. She is a member of Dramatist Guild and Stage Directors and Choreographers union, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She serves the artistic community primarily as an administrator, actor, director, teaching artist, and educator. Highlighted theatrical projects include: (Playwright) *Sameness* - Contemporary Arts Museum Houston; (Actor) *Front Porch Society* by Melda Beatty - The Ensemble Theatre at the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, North Carolina; (Producer) several SWH Annual 10x10 Ten Minute Play Festivals; and (Director) *Lady Day* at Emersons Bar & Grill at Stages Theater. Rachel currently serves as a member of Arts Connect Houston's Leadership Committee.

# SEEING THE IMPACT OF THE ARTS: THE BIG PICTURE

A macro lens confirms that ensuring equitable access for all students to a high-quality education which includes the arts has benefits for the Houston of today and tomorrow.



**Dr. Erin Baumgartner,**  
Director, Kinder Institute's  
Houston Education Research Consortium

Erin Baumgartner is Director of the Kinder Institute's Houston Education Research Consortium. Baumgartner's research interests include sociology of education, sociology of the family, social stratification, research methods, social demography, educational role of the family and quantitative methods. Baumgartner has a Ph.D. in sociology and demography from Pennsylvania State University.

# THROUGH THE WORDS OF A POET

Art serves as a processing mechanism for the world as it changes around us in real time. Hear the context of the 2022 State of the Arts In Education through the perspective of a student spoken word artist.



**Ariana Lee,**  
Poet, Metafour Houston Team

Ariana Lee (she/her/她) is from Houston, Texas. She is a 2022 member of Meta-Four Houston, Houston's official youth slam poetry team coached by Blacqwildflowr and City of Houston Poet Laureate Outspoken Bean. She has been recognized by the National YoungArts Foundation and may be found on IG @ari.purplecrayon.

# PANEL DISCUSSION: THE IMPACT OF THE ARTS ON STUDENTS WITH DIFFERING ABILITIES

Moderator



**Wes Holloway,**  
Artist,  
Corcoran School at the  
University of Washington

Born and raised in Katy, Texas, a dedication and enthusiasm for the arts extends as far back as Wes Holloway can recall. His sincere devotion to drawing and painting is paralleled only by his interest in science, biology, and philosophy. However, in 2003, after one year of undergraduate work at the University of Texas at Austin, Wes broke his C5-C6 vertebrae in a diving accident, suffered a spinal cord injury and thus became paralyzed from the chest down. After a year of recovery and rehabilitation, it became apparent that he would not regain use of his legs, abdomen or hands. Even though the life Wes knew had changed forever, it did not sway him from pursuing his goals for the future. If nothing else, Wes decided that he was going to spend the rest of his life intensely engaged with his first passion, art. Therefore, Wes returned to the University of Texas, and later completed both a BA and BFA in studio art. Currently, alongside his own studio practice, Wes teaches underserved groups in the Houston Area in hopes to use art as an expressive healing tool.

Wes' work mostly explores the body and how society responds to the human form. In his paintings and drawings; sexuality, grotesque beauty, body ideals, vanity, and the ambiguity between pleasure and pain are all common themes. Wes references many of today's popular media, including: magazine trimmings, Internet jpegs, medical book illustrations, and film stills. By experimenting with collage, composite layers, and superimposing images, Wes is literally able to deconstruct beauty and investigate how images interact. He often discusses memories and time, and how they inform the world around us (or our perception of that world). Masculinity, glorification of violence, growing up gay, gender norms and traversing boyhood into manhood all take on new meaning after a disability. Wes' initial goal in his art making practice is to explore male-centric themes, but he strongly believes these topics cross social groups and speak to a universal struggle for acceptance, journey to celebrate our flaws and embrace our differences.

# PANEL DISCUSSION (CONT.)

Panelist



**Millard House II,**  
Superintendent,  
Houston ISD

Millard House II currently serves as the superintendent of the Houston Independent School District. Prior to his time in HISD, he served as superintendent of the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System in Tennessee and in 2021 was named TN Mid-Cumberland Superintendent of the Year. Superintendent House is a Tulsa, OK native who started his career as a physical education teacher and has more than 25 years of experience in education and the nonprofit sector. He previously served as chief operating officer of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina and as deputy superintendent of Tulsa Public Schools in Oklahoma. Superintendent House earned his Bachelor of Science from the University of Montevallo, Alabama and his Master of Administration in School Administration from Northeastern State University, Oklahoma. He also graduated from the Fisher School Leadership Program at the Haskins School of Business, University of California at Berkeley.

# PANEL DISCUSSION (CONT.)

Panelist



**Angel Ponce,**  
Director,  
Houston's Office for People with Disabilities

Angel Ponce is the Director of the City of Houston Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD). Ponce is a bilingual advocacy and government professional with 11 years of experience in city government. He worked as the Senior Community Engagement Liaison at MOPD between 2014 to 2021.

In 2004, Ponce suffered a spinal cord injury resulting from an automobile wreck. He is now a wheelchair user.

"As a staunch advocate for the disability community, Angel understands the importance of equal participation and full inclusion of all citizens, including citizens with disabilities," said Mayor Sylvester Turner.

As a Senior Community Engagement Liaison for MOPD, Ponce provided management support to the Houston Commission on Disabilities (HCOD), served as a translator between legal department attorneys and Spanish-speaking residents, conducted disability awareness workshops for employers and disability etiquette and educational presentations for youth and professionals. He also provided management support in the City of Houston Mayor's Anti-Gang Office from 2008 to 2014.

Ponce was co-founder of the National Coalition for Latinxs with Disabilities (CNLD) and is currently the Chair for the United Way of Greater Houston, Interagency Information and Referral Network. He holds an associate's degree from Lone Star College and is currently attending the University of Houston pursuing a bachelor's degree in Communication Studies with a minor in Management and Leadership.



# PANEL DISCUSSION (CONT.)

Panelist



**Mireille Patman,**  
Parent & Former Principal Dancer,  
Houston Ballet

Photo Credit: Amitava Sarkar

Mireille Hassenboehler Patman, affectionally called Mimi, is a former professional ballet dancer who performed as a principal dancer until 2013. Her career with Houston Ballet spans 21 years having performed in England, China, Russia, and throughout the United States. She has performed leading roles in many well-known classical ballets, such as, “The Sleeping Beauty,” and “Swan Lake,” as well as more contemporary works that remain in the repertoire of Houston Ballet.

Mrs. Patman has taught and coached dancers from the Houston Ballet II and assisted in teaching children with Down syndrome at the Houston Ballet adapted dance program. She currently has focused her energies on advocating for her own child with Down syndrome and finishing her college education in Communications at the University of Houston.

Mrs. Patman is also a founding member of Houston Special Education Parent Association (HSEPA), a parent organization advocating for children with disabilities in HISD. She also belongs to Steel Magnolia Moms, a social group of moms who organize to help moms navigate better outcomes for their children with differing abilities.

Mimi, her husband Bob and their son, Teddy, live in Houston Heights.

# 2022 CHAMPION AWARDS

The Arts Connect Champion in the Arts Awards were established in 2021 to recognize leaders in Arts Education who have made significant impacts to the field in Houston.

Presenting the Champion In Education



**Jared Berry,**  
Theatre Curriculum Specialist,  
Houston ISD Fine Arts Department

Jared Berry (he/him/his) is Houston ISD's Fine Arts Curriculum Specialist for Theatre. Mr. Berry holds a B.A. in Theatre Studies from Wright State University, an M.A. in Theatre Education from Emerson College, and Principal Certification from Lamar University. Previous to his current position, Mr. Berry was the Magnet Coordinator at Pin Oak Middle School. Before moving to administration, Mr. Berry was the Director of Theatre at Pin Oak for eight years. Other teaching credits include serving as second-in-charge of Drama at Shenfield High School in Brentwood, Essex, England and at as asst. director of theatre at Lamar High School in Houston. Mr. Berry is active in Texas' U.I.L. One Act Play contest as a certified adjudicator and has served in various capacities with the Texas Educational Theatre Association. Organizational memberships include the Texas Theatre Administrators Conference (TTAC), Texas Music Administrators Conference (TMAC), and the Texas Educational Theatre Association (TxETA).

# 2022 CHAMPION AWARDS

Presenting the Champion In the Arts



**Necole S. Irvin,**  
Director,  
Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs

Necole S. Irvin leads the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs (MOCA) in the country's fourth largest and most diverse city of Houston. MOCA guides the City's cultural investments with policies and initiatives that expand access to arts and cultural programs in the community, attract visitors and leverage private investment.

She is a philanthropic professional with legal, art, public health, cultural, policy and international experience working to advance the quality of communities and the advancement of long-term sustainable change. Her extensive experience as a strong leader and strategic thinker was the driver to her municipal public service implementing the City's Arts and Cultural Plan as the first Cultural Tourism Officer with the MOCA.

Prior to joining the City of Houston, Necole was principal and founder of Blackwood Advisors, LLC a philanthropic service firm. She also served as a Program Officer with the private foundation Houston Endowment, working primarily in health and senior program officer with a regional foundation that promotes racial, social and economic equity in Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi. She served as a government relations director with an international health association and with the U.S. Peace Corps as a health educator and member of the guinea worm eradication team in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. Necole received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Emory University and a Juris Doctorate and Masters in Public Health from Tulane University.



**2022 Honoree**  
**Dr. Margo Hickman,**  
Theatre Teacher,  
Jack Yates High School

Margo Hickman is a wife, mother of four adult children and grandmother to Sammy (12) and princess Jordyn (2). Margo and her husband Theo Hickman (Senior Accountant) believe their first ministry is their family.

Their daughter Jasmin is currently on Broadway in the “Book of Mormon”, daughter Lauren is a prenatal nurse, son Jonathan is serving in the Navy and youngest son Teddy is an aspiring screen writer. Margo also honors her parents, mother JoAnn Richardson (shero), late father Willie Richardson and sister Sonji Richardson.

Margo has been serving as chair of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility for the Texas Educational Theatre Association which has over 500 secondary and higher education members throughout the state of Texas.

Margo recently defended her dissertation at Grand Canyon University where she completed her doctorate in Education with an emphasis in Organizational Leadership. She believes her personal accomplishment is to model for her children and students “nothing is impossible if you believe!”

# 2022 CHAMPION IN THE ARTS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT



## **2022 Honoree**

### **Alice Valdez,**

Founder & Executive Director  
MECA

Known as a visionary and community leader, Alice Valdez has worked for over three decades to help disadvantaged youth and families create a brighter future for themselves and the community. Determination, commitment and a refusal to yield to the impossible are her trademarks, and her work has had a tremendous impact on hundreds of Houstonians. Valdez has a Bachelor of Music Education degree from the University of Texas at El Paso and is certified to teach instrumental music at all grade levels in Texas. She studied oboe with Raymond Weaver, first oboist of the Houston Symphony and Richard Henderson, first oboist of the El Paso Symphony and Dean of Fine Arts at UTEP. Valdez performed as an oboist for the El Paso Symphony from 1968 to 1970. She has worked as a freelance instrumentalist (oboe, guitar, and flute) and vocalist, and served as the Music Liturgy Director for Post Chapel (Ft. McPherson, Georgia) from 1970 to 1971, and for St. Joseph Parish (Houston, Texas) from 1980 to 1991. She has previously taught music at Teatro Bilingüe de Houston, Annunciation Catholic School, and at elementary and junior high schools in Georgia and Texas. Valdez continues to provide instruction as a private woodwind and Suzuki violin teacher.

Valdez is responsible for the administration of MECA, and also serves as liaison with representatives of community-based organizations, aids with social economic issues affecting the participants of MECA art and education programs, and advocates for arts organizations of color. Under her leadership, MECA has received numerous awards and recognitions. Valdez has directed several major public mural and sculpture projects across Houston. She also initiated the planning for and directed the construction of the Old Sixth Ward Art Park, an inner-city art park.

Valdez has received numerous honors throughout her illustrious career. Valdez has also served as a keynote speaker, presenter, panelist, board and advisory board member, and committee member for numerous social and arts organizations.

# THE FUTURE OF FINE ARTS IN HISD



**Dr. Rick Cruz,**  
Deputy Superintendent,  
Houston ISD

Dr. Rick Cruz serves as the Deputy Superintendent of Houston ISD. In this role, he assists the Superintendent with carrying out the district's strategic plan and operations across 273 schools. He began his career in education after joining Teach for America and serving as a bilingual teacher in the district, during which he was twice named Teacher of the Year. While still teaching, he founded and lead EMERGE Fellowship, a nationally-acclaimed program serving thousands of youth that helps talented low-income students attend and graduate from the nation's top colleges. Since 2013, he has held various executive roles in the district and has successfully lead major areas and initiatives spanning academics to student support services. Dr. Cruz graduated with honors from Yale University and holds a master's and a doctorate from the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Cruz is a current member of Arts Connect Houston's Leadership Committee.

# THE FUTURE OF FINE ARTS IN HISD



**Wenden Sanders,**  
Director,  
Houston ISD Fine Arts Department

Mr. Wenden Sanders has served the students, families, community and HISD the last twelve years. He served as principal of Meyerland Performing and Visual Arts Middle School for 6 years and led the campus to achieve six TEA distinctions in the areas of mathematics, ELA/Reading, Science, closing the achievement gap, post-secondary readiness and student progress. Mr. Sanders has been a public-school educator for 30 years with thirteen as a choral music teacher/fine arts department chair and seventeen as a campus/district administrator. As a music educator, he led his choirs to earn UIL sweepstakes, best of class and consistent superior awards. Over 350 students in his choral music programs were provided cultural arts travel experiences to New York, Italy, Germany, and France where they developed a deeper understanding and appreciation of music and art. He served as a Texas Music Adjudication Association judge, Texas Music Education Association region officer, fine arts department chair and member of the Texas Choral Directors Association, ASCD, NASSP, TASSP, HAMA and HASA. Mr. Sanders earned a bachelor's degree of Music in Music Education from Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas and a master's degree of education in educational administration from Prairie View A&M University. Wenden is a current member of Arts Connect Houston's Leadership Committee.

# TIME - TREASURE - TALENT

Arts Connect board members will join the 2022 student emcees to share actionable ways to engage with the collective work towards equitable access to an arts education for every student.



**Judy Nyquist,**  
Arts Connect Board Member

Judy Nyquist is an art historian, curator, and art activist. Judy's philanthropic activities focus on arts education and public art in Houston. She has an express interest in making art accessible to all. Judy has served on the Boards and committees of The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, The Menil Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Glassell School of Art, Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, Glasstire, Hope Stone, Rice University's Public Art Program, Asia Society, Arts Connect, Blaffer Art Museum, Artadia, Every Shelter, and many more. In these service roles, she seeks to bolster education, exposure, and availability to wide audiences.



**Jack McBride,**  
Arts Connect Board Member

Jack McBride is a nonprofit professional and arts education advocate from Houston, Texas. With over 20 years' experience in the nonprofit community, including at the AmeriCorps, the University of Texas, and Writers in the Schools, Jack's work has focused on equity of arts access for children, strategic planning, LGBTQ+ equality, and advocacy for artists, writers, and teachers. Jack grew up in San Angelo in an arts-rich and book-rich home and knows fully the impact an arts-rich education can have on children. Currently, he serves on the board of directors for Equality Texas and as leadership chair for Arts Connect Houston. Jack has a B.A. in Art History and Spanish from Trinity University and a Masters in Nonprofit Administration from the University of Notre Dame. In their spare time, Jack and his husband Thain really enjoy drinking margaritas.