Barriers to Using California Proposition 28 Arts and Music Funding Guarantee and Accountability Act Funds

Initial Reports From County Offices of Education, Districts, and Schools

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Preface

In 2022, California voters passed Proposition 28 (Prop 28), the Arts and Music (AMS) Funding Guarantee and Accountability Act, which established annual funding (ranging from $938 million to more than $1 billion) for arts education for all public schools across the state. This first-of-its-kind legislation provides a permanent funding source dedicated to arts education for California's public school students. WestEd, in partnership with Create CA, received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and funding from the Perenchio Foundation to study the initial impact of these funds on the state's arts education landscape.

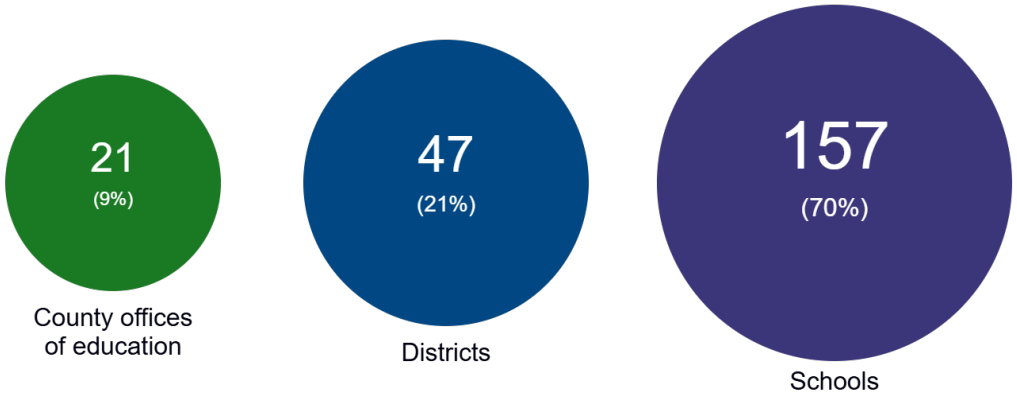
In spring 2025, WestEd surveyed staff from county offices of education (COEs), districts, and schools across the state to understand the initial impact of this funding. This brief focuses on examining the potential barriers COEs, districts, and schools face in implementing and using Prop 28 AMS funds.

Overview of Respondents and Data

To ensure that the most valid data were used, respondents who answered less than 25% of the survey questions were removed from the analysis. Although 332 respondents began the survey, data from 225 (67%) were included in the analysis. Of these respondents, 21 represented COEs, 47 represented districts, and 157 represented schools (Figure 1). The percentage of respondents removed for not meeting the 25% threshold was similar across all three groups.

COE staff were asked to rate the extent to which potential challenges were barriers to implementing Prop 28 AMS funds in their county's districts. District and school staff were asked to rate the extent to which potential challenges were barriers to increasing access to arts education. Responses were measured on a 5-point scale from 1 = not at all a challenge to 5 = an insurmountable challenge. Items with a rating of 2.5 or greater were considered barriers, and lower ratings indicated that the item was less of a challenge.

Figure 1. Distribution of Respondents



Barriers to Using Prop 28 AMS Funds

Respondents identified a range of barriers to implementing Prop 28 AMS funding and expanding access to arts education. Several challenges emerged across all respondent groups, and notable differences were observed among county, district, and school participants, which reflected their distinct roles and perspectives.

Key Takeaways

- Some large variances were observed among county, district, and school respondents. County respondents reported the highest overall ratings, followed by district and then school staff.
- At the county level, the items rated as the biggest barriers were an inability to recruit and hire arts educators, an overall lack of credentialed arts educators, and insufficient funding for the arts.
- At the district level, the items rated as the biggest barriers were competing academic priorities, expected budget shortfalls, lack of credentialed arts educators, and lack of space and facilities for arts instruction.
- At the school level, the highest rated items were limited knowledge about Prop 28 AMS funding, a lack of district leadership support, and expected budget shortfalls.

- A lack of student interest in the arts and of parental and community support for the arts were not concerns—these items were rated the lowest overall.

Table 1. Average Rating by Respondent Group

Challenge	Counties	Districts	Schools	Overall
Competing academic priorities	3.26	3.13	n/a	3.20
Limited Prop 28 AMS knowledge	3.06	2.61	3.10	2.92
Expected budget shortfalls	2.78	3.13	2.72	2.88
Lack of credentialed arts educators	3.42	3.11	2.01	2.85
Lack of space and facilities	2.89	3.11	2.54	2.85
Inability to recruit and hire art teachers	3.53	2.80	2.04	2.79
Insufficient funding	3.32	2.67	2.05	2.68
Competing nonacademic priorities	2.68	2.60	2.54	2.61
Expected declining enrollment	2.22	2.93	2.40	2.52
Lack of district leadership support	2.79	1.93	2.78	2.50
Inability to purchase supplies and materials	2.42	2.02	2.63	2.36
Lack of school leadership support	2.63	2.11	2.32	2.35
Difficulty fitting arts into schedules	n/a	n/a	2.19	2.19
Lack of time to teach the arts	n/a	n/a	1.99	1.99
Lack of parental and community support	2.17	1.60	2.05	1.94
Lack of student interest	1.11	1.44	1.71	1.42

Note. Responses were on a 5-point scale from 1 = not at all a challenge to 5 = an insurmountable challenge. Items with a rating of 2.5 or greater were considered barriers, and lower ratings indicated that the item was less of a challenge.

Other Findings of Interest

- Some large variances were based on urbanicity, with urban respondents documenting fewer challenges than suburban, rural, and remote respondents did.
  - The greatest challenges facing rural and remote areas were competing academic priorities (3.33), lack of credentialed arts educators (3.26), inability to recruit and hire arts educators (3.15), and limited knowledge of Prop 28 AMS (3.00).
  - The greatest challenges facing urban areas were limited knowledge of Prop 28 AMS (2.88), expected budget shortfalls (2.83), and lack of space and facilities (2.80).
  - The greatest challenges facing suburban areas were competing academic priorities (3.38), limited knowledge of Prop 28 AMS (3.03), expected budget shortfalls (2.85), and lack of district leadership support (2.78).
- Among school-level respondents, differences emerged based on grade levels. Elementary school staff were more likely to report budget, space, and time as challenges. Middle school staff reported lack of district, school, family, and community support as challenges. High school staff were more likely to report lack of Prop 28 AMS knowledge, declining enrollment, and competing priorities as challenges.
- Challenges were rated higher (i.e., more of a barrier) among general education teachers than among arts educators and among traditional school respondents compared with charter school respondents.

Suggested Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

Participants had the opportunity to offer suggestions and strategies related to overcoming barriers, regardless of whether the strategy was being implemented.

Their written responses were analyzed for common themes and are shared here along with quotations that are representative of the theme.

Reform and clarify the 80/20 rule.

Prop 28 AMS includes a stipulation that 80% of funds must be used on staffing, with up to 20% used for supplies, materials, or other arts-related expenses. This is commonly referred to as the 80/20 rule. Respondents from counties, districts, and schools indicated that this requirement created a challenge because they needed supplies, instruments, and materials before they could offer additional classes.

- "There should be [fewer] restrictions on the 80/20 spending requirement as many districts need access to supplies, materials, etc."
- "Adjust the percentage required for staff versus materials, supplies, field trips, facility upgrades, etc. We need more percentage dedicated to the latter."
- "Modifying the 80/20 percentage is necessary, because we cannot teach more students if we don't have enough quality instruments to teach them on."
- "Don't restrict the funds to 80% staff when it is impossible to add arts classes in high school."

Strengthen reporting and accountability enforcement.

Multiple respondents across counties, districts, and schools described what they considered misuse of funds without consequence and called for mandatory training, audits, and state-level enforcement.

- "We need oversight that truly prevents supplanting funding for existing positions. There are too many loopholes right now that the auditors are not addressing."
- "SO MANY are using the funds inappropriately with absolutely no consequences."

- “Mandatory training for district admin on supplanting.”
- “Closer monitoring/accounting of how funds have been used and whether they’ve been used correctly.”

Provide clearer guidance on the use of funds.

Related but distinct from accountability, respondents also reported confusion about allowable uses of funds and requested clearer guidance, including a definitive FAQ, clearer state communication, and consistent interpretation across districts.

- “The FAQ need to spell out exactly what Prop 28 monies can be used for. One district’s understanding is not another’s.”
- “Clear distinction on what the 80% versus 20% can be spent on. Are classified staff ‘okayed’ at the state level to be paid from the 80%? How is supplanting versus supplementing being enforced?"
- “[We need] transparency from the top down and clarity on what Prop 28 provides and how it should be used in a TK–8 setting.”

Train and educate district and school administrators about Prop 28 AMS.

District administrators and principals were repeatedly identified as gatekeepers whose lack of knowledge about Prop 28 AMS blocked implementation. Respondents called for training on Prop 28 AMS for administrators that covers arts education benefits and proper fund use.

- “Principals did not believe this funding was real. They didn’t want to plan arts experiences. ... Then when it came, they wanted to spend it on non-arts things.”
- “Education for DISTRICT staff about what Prop 28 is and HOW it can be best utilized IN PARTNERSHIP with existing arts staff.”

- “Require superintendents and principals to receive training in understanding the benefit of arts education for all students. ... It is at this level where decisions are made.”

Reform the funding formula for rural and small districts.

Respondents from rural and small districts noted that the per pupil funding formula did not provide sufficient funding to hire staff, thus creating a structural inequity.

- “The formula for funding rural single school districts is a drop in the bucket. It may cover materials but will not fund a teacher.”
- “Small amounts of under $2,000 at many of our sites is barely enough to bring a few artists to the school throughout the year.”
- “[We] need funding to come to the district instead of school sites to best leverage funds for students.”

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