

ANNUAL REPORT

25

WHAT ALABAMA STUDENTS
MADE POSSIBLE

26



AMP UP ARTS



Arts Education for every student, every school, every community.

Our Vision

Arts education for every student, every school, every community.

Our Mission

To advance equitable experiences in arts education for all Alabama students through partnerships, advocacy, and resource development.

Who We Are

We believe every Alabama student deserves the chance to create, perform, imagine, and discover what the arts can make possible.

Amp Up Arts is Alabama's statewide arts education nonprofit and the official arts education partner of the Alabama State Council on the Arts. We bring schools, teaching artists, arts organizations, funders, and community partners together so that more students can experience meaningful arts learning, especially in places where those opportunities have been limited.

No two Alabama communities are exactly alike, and we do not believe their arts programs should be either. We listen first, learn what is already strong in each place, and help local partners build opportunities that reflect their students, culture, and goals.

What That Looks Like

- A child attending a professional performance for the first time.
- A teaching artist finding a new way to share their creative work with students.
- A school discovering that one successful residency can grow into something lasting.
- Communities sharing resources and building arts opportunities together.
- Young people using their own voices to shape the future of arts education.

A Message from Leadership

Dear Amp Up Arts Community,

This year gave us so many reasons to believe in what is possible for arts education in Alabama. Students stepped onto stages, filled galleries with their work, picked up instruments, explored new art forms, and discovered talents they had not yet been given the chance to use. Schools tried something new and then asked, "What can we do next?"

Together, we reached more than 22,000 students in over 100 schools. Those numbers are exciting, but the moments behind them are what stay with us: a first professional performance, a first public exhibition, a first portfolio, or the first time a student could picture a future in the arts.

We also built new possibilities for the years ahead. We launched Alabama's first statewide Youth Arts Collective, expanded a growing arts ecosystem in Sheffield City Schools, invested in teaching artists and educators, and became a Wolf Trap Institute affiliate, creating a new pathway for arts-integrated early learning.

None of this work belongs to Amp Up Arts alone. It belongs to the students who brought their ideas, the artists and educators who made room for discovery, and the partners and supporters who kept saying yes. We are deeply grateful to be building this alongside you.

Pame Cavellos

Pame Cavellos

Board President



2025-2026

At A Glance

22,000+

Students Reached

116

Schools Engaged

92

Teaching Artists

98%

Title I School Partnerships

86%

Students of Color

**Every
number
has a
story.**

Behind every number is a young person who had the chance to make something, try something, perform something, or see something new. It might have been one joyful afternoon or the beginning of an interest that lasts for years. Our job is to help create more of those moments and give schools and communities what they need to keep them going.

How the Work Comes Together

Direct Student Programming

We help students meet artists, make and perform their own work, visit new places, and experience the arts during the school day, after school, and throughout the summer.

Community and District Partnerships

We start with the people who know their communities best. Together, we look at what students need, what local partners can offer, and what could grow when those pieces are connected.

Teaching Artist and Educator Development

Artists and educators deserve support too. We share practical tools, resources, and encouragement that help them create welcoming, engaging learning experiences for students.

Funding and Resource Development

A good idea should not end because a school or artist does not know where to find funding. We help partners find opportunities, shape strong plans, and turn ideas into real programs for students.

Advocacy and Statewide Leadership

We make space for students, educators, artists, and communities to be heard, then carry their experiences into statewide conversations about what Alabama students need and deserve.

The Numbers Matter Because **the Moments Matter**

Statewide scale matters, but the clearest evidence of impact is often found in a student's first experience, a school taking its next step, or a community creating an opportunity that did not exist before. Amp Up Arts' collaborative model allows each region to respond to its own needs, assets, and opportunities.

Barbour County: A First Professional Performance

For many participating students, a trip to The Black and Gold Nutcracker was their first opportunity to experience a professional performance. Their teaching artist reported increased student interest in dance afterward, showing how one meaningful experience can open a new possibility.

Mobile: Student Work in a Professional Gallery

In Mobile, 412 students from 12 schools created jazz-inspired artwork and saw their work presented in a professionally curated university gallery exhibition. Students were not only introduced to the artistic legacy of jazz; they experienced their own ideas being treated as work worthy of public presentation.

Crenshaw County: Building a Portfolio and a Future

Eight high school students who had not had access to a full-time visual arts teacher learned what an art portfolio was, created their own portfolios, and publicly exhibited their work. The experience gave students both practical tools and a new way to imagine continued study and careers in the arts.



Sheffield: Building a Districtwide Arts Ecosystem

One year ago, Sheffield's elementary students did not have certified arts educators in grades K-8. Today through our partnership, every elementary student has opportunities to learn through the arts across the school year. That change did not come from a single program. It grew from a district willing to imagine something different, artists ready to build relationships with students, and partners willing to keep showing up.

Sheffield City Schools serves approximately 928 students. Together, the district and Amp Up Arts have built a growing mix of arts opportunities during the school day, after school, and throughout the summer, with each new experience helping reveal what students enjoy and what the district wants to build next.

During the 2025-2026 School Year

- Students in grades 3-6 at L.E. Willson Elementary participated in ongoing performing arts programming twice each week.
- Students in kindergarten through second grade at Threadgill Primary participated in dance programming, followed by additional music, drumming, and visual arts experiences.
- Teaching artists supported student learning through performing arts, movement, music, visual art, and interdisciplinary experiences.
- Amp Up Arts worked with district and school leaders to connect programming with long-term planning, school needs, and new funding opportunities.

Summer 2026

Summer programming extended access beyond the traditional school year. Students participated in music, digital music production, dance, visual art, and mural experiences, including a multi-day K-6 music series and large-scale student-centered mural projects across school spaces.

Students built skills, made music, moved, performed, experimented, and left pieces of their own creativity on the walls of their schools. Sheffield shows what can happen when partners stop thinking only about the next program and begin asking what arts learning could look like across an entire district.

Looking Forward

As we move into a new school year, Sheffield City Schools has worked with Amp Up Arts to expand their arts education into the junior high level, and lengthen teaching artist residencies to **ensure every student PreK-6 has arts education at least once a week for the entire school year.**



Impact That Continues

Some of our favorite stories begin after a program is supposed to be over. A school finds a way to keep an artist. Students ask for another performance. A new club forms. What began as one opportunity starts becoming part of the life of the school.

Troy

After experiencing Amp Up Arts programming, Banks School hired its teaching artist to continue providing after-school art. Brantley School built on its experience by starting a drama club and producing its first play. In both communities, an initial partnership helped schools recognize what their students wanted and take ownership of the next opportunity.

Mobile

A school that presented only the second public theatre performance in its history went on to present a third. Repeated access begins to shift an arts experience from an exception into part of a school's culture.

Huntsville

Longstanding school relationships continue year after year, while local support and school investment help sustain residencies, educator learning, and creative opportunities across the greater Huntsville area.

Statewide

Since 2023, **six** Amp Up Arts teaching artists have gone on to be hired as full-time art teachers in Alabama public schools, strengthening both immediate access and the long-term arts education workforce.



Youth Arts Collective

We spend a lot of time talking about what students need. The Youth Arts Collective began with a different question: What if students were part of deciding?

During the 2025-2026 year, Amp Up Arts launched Alabama's first statewide Youth Arts Collective. The inaugural cohort brings together young people from Montgomery, Tuscaloosa, Mobile, Troy, and Huntsville to share what arts education looks like in their communities and help shape what it could become.

Students meet statewide, develop leadership skills, learn how arts policy and advocacy work, and collaborate through advocacy and media teams. Student leaders serve in roles including President, Vice President, Advocacy Captain, Media and Outreach Coordinator, and Regional Representative Coordinator.

Students do more than offer opinions. They hold leadership roles, identify priorities, create public messages, represent their regions, and build relationships with students whose school experiences may look very different from their own. Their honesty, ideas, and leadership are already making our work better.

From Alabama to a National Conversation

The Youth Arts Collective model was subsequently featured at the national Arts Education Partnership Annual Convening in September 2026. Amp Up Arts shared the development of this student-led initiative with arts education leaders from across the country, extending the reach of work launched during the reporting year.



Strengthening the Workforce

Teaching artists bring something special into a school: professional creative practice, a different kind of energy, and an invitation for students to see the world in a new way. They are especially important in communities where students may not otherwise have regular access to an arts educator.

We want artists to feel just as prepared and supported as the students they teach. Amp Up Arts offers training, resources, funding guidance, and connections that help artists build strong, welcoming experiences in schools and community programs.

Training focuses on the realities of teaching in school and community settings, including lesson planning, standards and rigor, classroom management, student engagement, arts integration, culturally responsive practice, and grant development. This support helps artists translate professional creative expertise into meaningful, age-appropriate learning experiences.

A Pathway into Alabama Classrooms

Since 2023, **six** Amp Up Arts teaching artists have been hired as school art teachers in Alabama.

Their transition into permanent education roles demonstrates the broader value of teaching artist development: it expands immediate programming while also strengthening the long-term arts education workforce.

Professional Learning That **Reaches Students**

Amp Up Arts supports educators and teaching artists with practical professional learning that can be used immediately. Through Teaching Artist Training Institutes, Creative Teaching Strategies, Arts and Cursive learning, grant workshops, and customized district support, participants build confidence and gain tools for making classrooms more creative, engaging, and responsive.

What Educators Have Told Us

100%

Find the trainings
engaging, inspiring, and
relevant

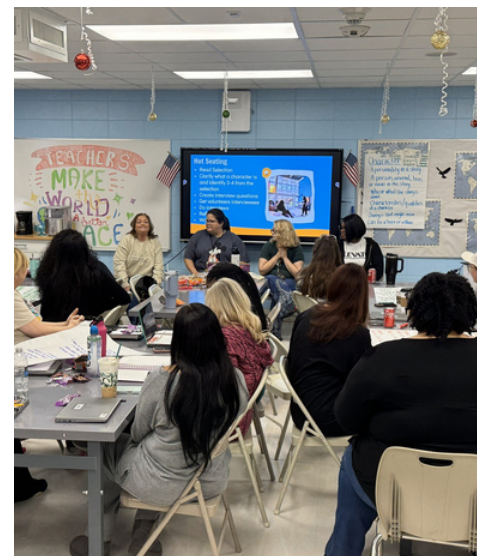
99%

Believed that their
students will benefit from
the strategies

97%

Found the tools and
strategies usable
immediately

These results reflect prior and current program evaluation findings and demonstrate that professional learning creates impact beyond the adults in the room. Each trained educator or teaching artist carries new strategies into future classrooms, extending the reach of Amp Up Arts across students, subjects, and school years.



Partnership Is the Strategy

The best part of this work is that no one has to build it alone. Alabama already has extraordinary artists, educators, arts organizations, school leaders, families, and community champions. Amp Up Arts helps them find one another, share what they know, and work toward something bigger together.

Statewide Partners

- A+ Education Partnership
- Alabama Arts Alliance
- Alabama Dance Council
- Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education
- Alabama Department of Human Resources
- Alabama Department of Mental Health
- Alabama Folklife Association
- Alabama State Council on the Arts
- Alabama State Department of Education
 - Office of Extended Learning
 - Office of School Improvement
- Alabama Writers' Forum
- Governor's Office of Education and Workforce Transformation
- Hundreds of state and regional arts, education, youth development, and community organizations

A New National Connection

In June 2026, Amp Up Arts became a Wolf Trap Institute affiliate, bringing a nationally recognized model for arts-integrated early childhood learning to Alabama. Through music, movement, drama, and imaginative play, young children will be able to build early learning skills in ways that feel joyful, active, and natural.

The next phase of this work will focus on training, partnership development, and securing the resources necessary to bring Wolf Trap programming to Alabama classrooms.

Building the System Behind the Programs

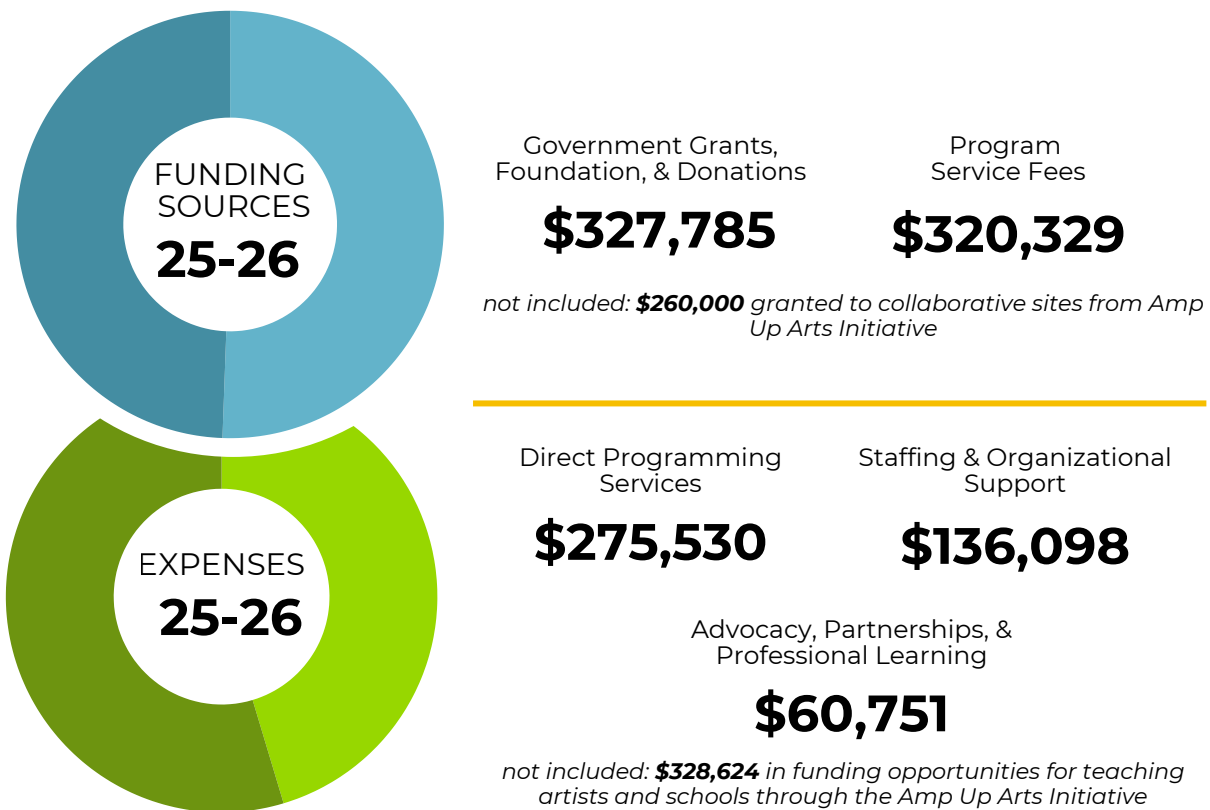
The joyful parts of this work are easy to see: paint-covered hands, students taking a bow, a hallway transformed by a mural. Behind every one of those moments is a great deal of quieter work that helps programs happen and, more importantly, helps them last.

- Coordinated statewide partnerships and shared planning across regional collaborative sites.
- Helped schools, districts, and teaching artists identify and pursue grants and other funding opportunities.
- Developed new resources for teaching artists, educators, partners, and advocates.
- Collected impact data and community input to inform program design and statewide strategy.
- Expanded staff capacity to support community engagement, communications, data, and program coordination.
- Represented Alabama arts education in statewide and national conversations.

This backbone work makes it possible for local programs to become more coordinated, more responsive, and more sustainable. It also helps Alabama use existing talent and resources more effectively, creating impact far beyond Amp Up Arts' direct operating budget.

Financial Stewardship and Leverage

Amp Up Arts combines public investment, private philanthropy, grants, contracts, program revenue, and community partnerships to expand arts education opportunities across Alabama. Our role is not limited to spending our own operating dollars. We also help schools, districts, artists, and community partners identify and access additional resources for student programming.



In addition to funds managed directly by Amp Up Arts, our grant development, partnership coordination, and funding guidance helped unlock programming and investment across participating communities. This leverage allows each dollar supporting Amp Up Arts' statewide role to create value well beyond the organization's own expenditures. During FY2026, more than **\$1.23 million** supported arts education through Amp Up Arts' state-level work and independently managed collaborative-site budgets across Alabama.

Our Supporters

Amp Up Arts' work is possible because public agencies, foundations, businesses, school systems, community partners, and individual donors invest in a future where every Alabama student can learn and grow through the arts.

2025-2026 Funders and Supporters

- Alabama Association of Resource Conservation & Development
- Alabama State Council on the Arts
- Alabama State Department of Education Office of School Improvement
- Alabama Support the Arts License Tag
- Genesis Inspiration Foundation
- Mervyn Seldon Charitable Arts Trust
- National Endowment for the Arts

We are equally grateful to the educators, teaching artists, school leaders, families, volunteers, and community organizations who contribute time, expertise, space, materials, and trust. Their partnership turns financial investment into meaningful experiences for students.

Our Team

Staff

Ashley Lucier
Executive Director

Taylor Ostronic
Community Engagement
Coordinator



Collaborative Site Leadership

Brenda Campbell, Troy
Joanna Lemmon, Tuscaloosa



Collaborative Site Leadership

Amy Mason, Huntsville
Kat Stoves, Mobile





This year showed us how quickly one opportunity can grow. A residency can become an after-school program. A student exhibition can become a new source of pride. A teaching artist can become a full-time art teacher. A group of students can become statewide advocates.

In the year ahead, we will keep listening, connecting, and building on what works so that more Alabama students can find their own place in the arts.

Our Next Priorities

- Launch and grow Wolf Trap arts-integrated early childhood programming in Alabama.
- Expand All Across Alabama and connect more student artwork with public exhibitions and statewide stories.
- Strengthen the Youth Arts Collective as a sustained platform for student voice and advocacy.
- Deepen district partnerships that create consistent, multi-year arts learning pathways.
- Grow teaching artist training, professional development, and practical resources for schools and communities.
- Use data, community input, and student stories to strengthen statewide advocacy and investment.

The goal remains clear: arts education for every student, every school, every community.

Looking Ahead

Help Us Amplify the Arts

Every student deserves a place to create, explore, and be heard. When you support Amp Up Arts, you help make that place possible in schools and communities across Alabama.

Connect

Email: info@ampuparts.org
Website: www.ampuparts.org
Phone: 334-245-3691

Take Action

- ▶ Donate to support statewide arts education access.
- ▶ Subscribe to The Reverb for opportunities, resources, and news.
- ▶ Partner with Amp Up Arts as a school, artist, organization, funder, or advocate.





**AMP UP
ARTS**

 ampuparts.org

 334-245-3691

 info@ampuparts.org

 @ampuparts

 201 Monroe Street, Suite 110
Montgomery, AL 36104

EIN: 93-2187387