



ARTS PLUS

2025-2026

IMPACT REPORT



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In the 2025-2026 year, Arts+ increased public program offerings and broadened community outreach to provide outstanding and accessible arts education to the greater Charlotte area. This was made possible by supporters like you! Read on to learn more about the impact of arts education.



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A MESSAGE FROM EDISON CASSELS & DEVLIN McNEIL

We are pleased to share this year's impact report and reflect on another year defined by growth, momentum, and commitment to our community. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, partners, volunteers, and advocates, we continued expanding access to high-quality arts education while making remarkable progress toward our vision for the Arts+ Community Campus.

This year, we balanced two significant priorities: activating our new campus with vibrant programming and community partnerships while continuing to raise the resources needed to transform it into a permanent home for creativity, learning, and connection. Every step forward brings us closer to creating a space that will serve generations of students, families, and artists across Charlotte.

We also expanded our partnership with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, bringing arts education to more schools and students through in-school and extracurricular programs. At the same time, we increased professional development opportunities for CMS educators, equipping hundreds of teachers with the skills and resources to integrate the arts into their classrooms and extend the impact of arts education to thousands more students.

As we look ahead, we are excited to begin construction on the Arts+ Community Campus this fall—a transformational step that would not be possible without your belief in our mission.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the Arts+ staff, thank you for your continued investment in Arts+. Your support helps us unleash creativity, transform lives, and build community through outstanding and accessible arts education.

With gratitude,



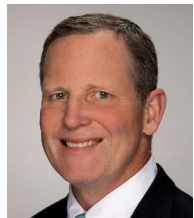
Edison Cassels

2025-2027 Board Chair



Devlin McNeil

President & Executive Director



WHO WE ARE



We are Arts+, and our mission is to unleash creativity, transform lives, and build community through outstanding and accessible arts education.

We offer instruction in music and visual art for both children and adults that is designed to provide access to outstanding arts education plus all the benefits it brings. Each year, we are proud

to deliver high-quality arts education to thousands of students. As a result of our extensive outreach programs, financial aid, community partnerships, and supporters, over 60% of our students receive their education for free or at a reduced cost.

We were founded as Community School of the Arts in 1969 by Henry Bridges and have been bringing arts education to the Charlotte area for over 50 years.

WHAT WE OFFER

PUBLIC PROGRAMS*

Group Classes & Workshops

Weekly series and one-day offerings exploring music and art for all ages

Charlotte Youth Choir

Two choirs for grades K-8 that practice weekly and perform throughout the year

Camps

Kids, youth, and teen camps with varying music and art themes

Carolina Suzuki Strings

Violin, viola, cello, and harp instruction following the principles of language acquisition

Private Lessons

One-on-one music instruction for both children and adults

Private Group Experiences

Unique ways to celebrate a birthday or spend time with family, friends, or coworkers

**Financial Aid Available*

OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Studio 345

Free, creative, out-of-school youth development program for Charlotte-Mecklenburg high school students

ArtsReach

Free visual arts and music programs provided with partner organizations

Project Harmony

Community-based orchestra for students in grades 3-5

Arts for All

Visual art and music instruction for at-risk preschools

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

Preschool Arts Lab

Literacy-based art instruction at local schools and early education centers

Music Classes, Lessons, & Coaching

Music instruction at local schools and early education centers

Festivals & Community Events

Free family-friendly arts activities and crafts

WHY WE DO IT

A teen who was feeling isolated gains confidence and friendship by working with her peers to create a stop animation film in Studio 345. A third grader who dreams of being in a band one day was finally able to learn the trumpet at Project Harmony. A new empty-nester has filled his evenings learning collage and finding a fresh routine.

A preschooler discovers that there is music, art, and movement in every book they read during Preschool Arts Lab.

Arts+ ensures everyone can access transformative experiences by removing barriers like cost. By investing in our future artists and musicians, we're helping to build a thriving community.



THE NEXT STEPS FOR THE ARTS+ COMMUNITY CAMPUS

The 2025–2026 fiscal year marked the second year that Arts+ welcomed the community to the Arts+ Community Campus. Arts+ activated the space with group classes and workshops, private lessons, camps, and festivals. The new space allowed us to host more programs than ever before—welcoming campers all summer long, expanding adult programs, hosting Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' music and visual art teachers for professional development, and more.





Courtesy of C Design. Rendering Not Final.

The Arts+ Community Campus has also provided much-needed space for artists, hosting 10 dedicated studio spaces and Activation Studios, an arts organization that provides affordable studio space to local artists. Additionally, the sanctuary has served as a vibrant hub for community engagement, holding meetings, art shows, and musical performances.

Simultaneously, Arts+ continued its capital campaign, narrowing in on our goal to raise \$17.5 million to transform the campus. As the 2026-2027 year begins, Arts+ prepares to close the campus for construction to convert the sanctuary into a 250-seat performance space for the Charlotte community, build a gallery that connects the campus's buildings and makes them accessible, and upfit existing infrastructure. During construction, Arts+ will continue to deliver programming at the Arts+ Uptown Studios, at community partners in the Plaza Midwood neighborhood, and at additional locations throughout the Charlotte area.

At its core, the Arts+ Community Campus project is about creating opportunities: ensuring that young people across Charlotte have access to outstanding arts education, creative exploration, mentorship, and community regardless of background or financial circumstance. Arts+ is deeply grateful for the support and encouragement we have received throughout the capital campaign and is excited for the future of the campus.

ARTS+ BY THE NUMBERS

Every year, Arts+ is proud to serve thousands of students. Because of our outreach programs, financial aid, community partnerships, and supporters, the majority of our students access programming for free or at a reduced cost.



1466

Group Class and
Workshop Students



777

Summer Campers
(Summer 2026)



247

Studio 345
Participants



44

Charlotte Youth
Choir Singers



118

Carolina Suzuki Strings
Musicians



276

Private Lesson
Students



2317

ArtsReach Students



119

Project Harmony
Musicians



570

Preschoolers



90

Financial Aid Students

PARTNERING WITH CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS

Arts+ was a recipient of funding from the Arts and Science Council, which supported established programs like Project Harmony, expanded existing programs like Professional Development, and created new programs like Field Trips to Studio 345. All programs focused on serving Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Throughout the year, Arts+ served students from 44 different schools, expanding our impact throughout Mecklenburg County schools.

"I feel like they boosted my confidence. As a newer teacher, it has felt overwhelming at times to find activities for my students that truly engage them. The response I have gotten from my students has been great."

CMS teacher reflecting on Arts+ Professional Development Sessions



"The Studio 345 field trip let me work with a high-quality camera. As someone who plans to work around them when I get older, that was my favorite part."

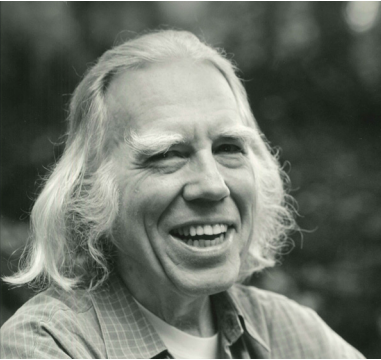
CMS High School Student

"Introducing instruments to young children who might not otherwise have the opportunity to learn to play, especially at such a young age, is an amazing thing. I didn't start to learn the flute until I was in 5th grade. The opportunity for kids to find so many ways to enjoy learning and creativity is amazing. Our kids don't always get this chance."

Project Harmony Parent



ARTS+ FOUNDERS DAY



Arts+ was founded as Community School of the Arts in 1969 by Henry Bridges, the organist and choir director of the First Presbyterian Church in Uptown Charlotte. He envisioned the program after realizing the church had 15 unused pianos in its basement and was surrounded by an urban neighborhood with children who could benefit from—but could not afford—high-quality music lessons.

In the inaugural year, Henry recruited four of the finest piano teachers in Charlotte and accepted 20 children from more than 150 applications. Students received instruction free of charge five days a week, learning through private lessons, supervised practice, choir, sight singing, and music theory.

Henry Bridges remained the executive director until 1982, when he stepped away from administrative duties to become a full-time piano teacher for the organization. Henry retired from teaching in 1992 but remained a lifetime member of the Board of Directors until his passing in 2018.



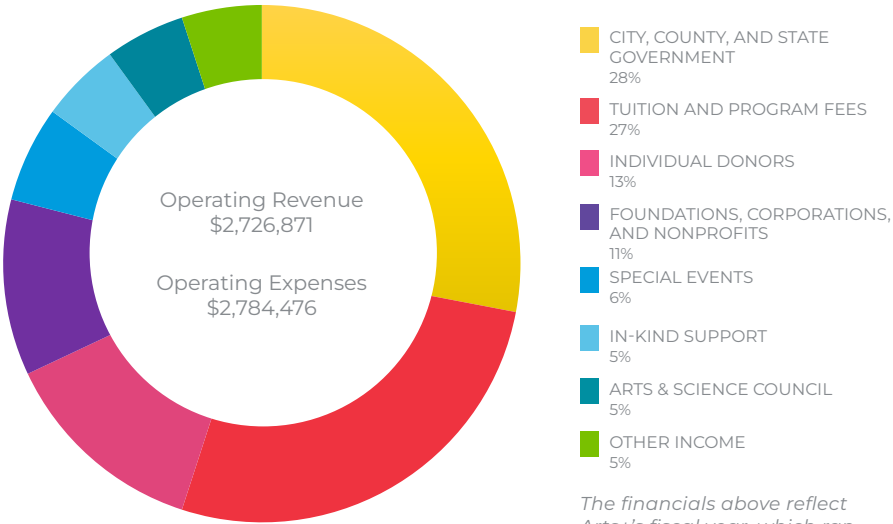
This new annual event takes place on Henry's birthday, July 22, and invites the community to come together for fun music and visual art activities.

Arts+ Founders Day is also a day about giving. Funds raised support all Arts+ programs—from Project Harmony and Studio 345 to Design to Dollars and Financial Aid. Founders Day is a festive way to celebrate how far we've come and what we have to look forward to.



FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Arts+ had a strong 2025-2026 fiscal year, with continued growth in program revenue driven in large part by operating the Arts+ Community Campus, which also brought new and necessary operating expenses. Our revenue base remains diverse, with support from individuals, government entities, foundations, corporations, and tuition. We saw significant growth in individual giving and ended the year with a small operating deficit of 2% as we continued to invest in the growth and expansion of our programs and campus.



The financials above reflect Arts+'s fiscal year, which ran from July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026.



CREATIVE MAKERS, CONTINUO, & IMPASTO

Creative Makers

Individuals who set up recurring donations are Creative Makers. They provide reliable support for a variety of Arts+ needs from ArtsReach supplies to private lesson financial aid.

Continuo

Continuo is our Leadership Giving Circle, recognizing individuals who give \$1,000 or more in a year. In music, Continuo describes a low-pitched instrument, like a keyboard or cello, that plays a bass line, providing structure to sustain the full harmony of the piece. As in music, Continuo gifts help us maintain our commitment to excellence, strengthen our programs, and deepen our impact in underserved communities.

Impasto Sponsors

To use the Impasto painting technique is to lay down a thick enough layer of paint with your brush that the strokes remain visible and expressive. Like this painting method, our corporate supporters leave a noticeable and profound impact on the communities that Arts+ serves by giving unrestricted gifts as Impasto Sponsors.

To support Arts+ individually or with a corporate gift, contact Haley Rafferty at hrafferty@artsplus.org or 704-887-0297.

BRIDGES SOCIETY

Named in honor of our founder, Henry Bridges, the Bridges Society recognizes those who include Arts+ in their estate plans. With Henry's founding guidance and the support of our Bridges Society members, we can ensure that the arts remain accessible for generations to come.

Three Easy Ways to Make a Planned Gift:

1. **Bequest:** A gift indicated in your will allows you to make a future donation to Arts+ after passing.
2. **Retirement Plan Assets:** An attractive option for making a planned gift since they are among the most tax-burdened assets in an estate. Simply name Arts+ as a beneficiary.
3. **Life Insurance:** To use a life insurance policy to make a gift, name Arts+ as a beneficiary of a new or existing policy.

Arts+ Tax ID/EIN: 59-1356847

There are many methods of making a planned gift. This is not intended to provide tax or legal advice and should not be relied on as such. You should consult with your legal and tax counsel to understand the implications of a specific charitable gift. If you have any questions, please contact Stephanie Stenglein at [sstenglein@artsplus.org](mailto:ssstenglein@artsplus.org) or 704-887-0298.



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ARTS **PLUS**

OUR MISSION

Unleashing creativity, transforming
lives, and building community
through outstanding and accessible
arts education.

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ARTS+ PROGRAMS**



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artsplus.org | PO Box 32757, Charlotte, NC 28232 | 704-377-4187 | info@artsplus.org

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