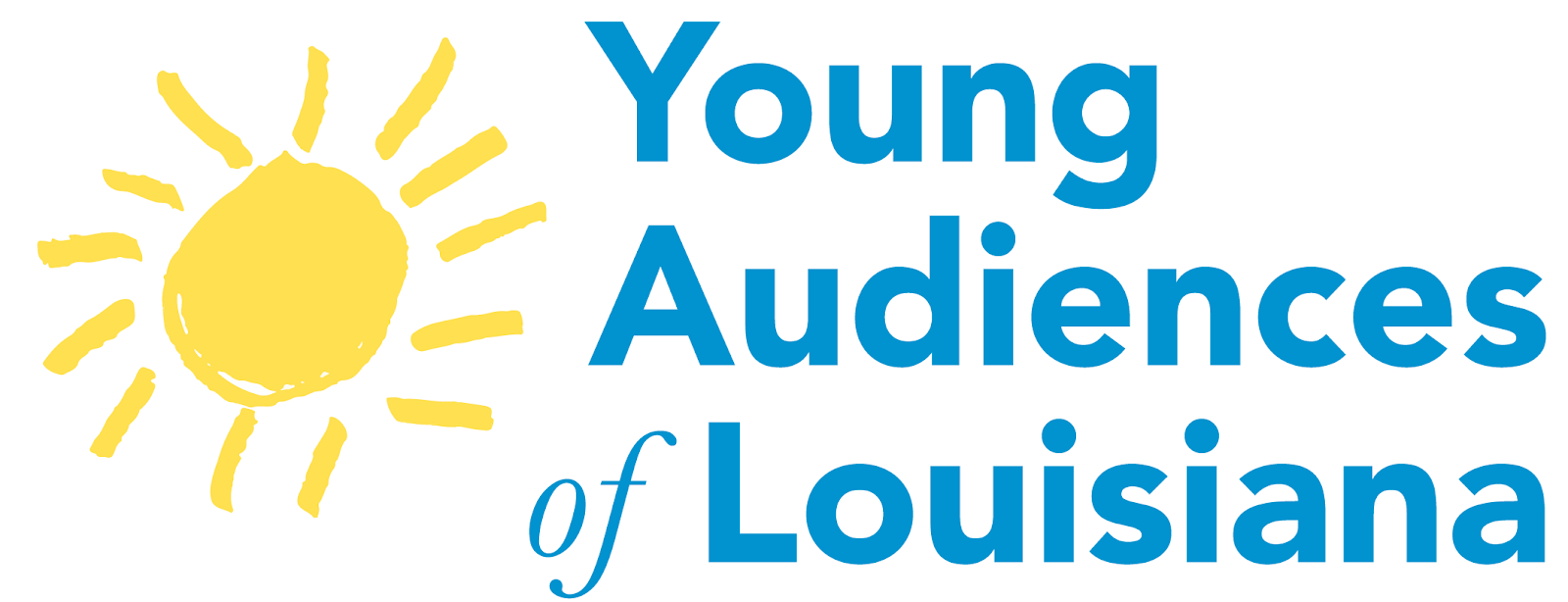
**Young Audiences of Louisiana launches $1.8 million program to bring the arts to middle school civics classrooms in three Louisiana parishes**

*NEW ORLEANS, LA – January 26, 2024 –* This week Young Audiences of Louisiana (YALA), the largest arts in education provider in the state, launches the History Education (Through) Arts Responsive Training (HEART) Program at [Young Audiences Charter Schools’](http://www.yacs.org) (YACS) Burmaster and Crocker campuses thanks to the support of their recent [$1.8 million award from the U.S. Department of Education](https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/effective-educator-development-programs/national-activities-grant/awards/) (U.S. DOE). In partnership with [Young Audiences Inc](http://www.ya.org). (YA), YALA will use their evidence-based arts-integration model to engage social studies students in Louisiana middle schools serving low-socioeconomic households and communities beginning with 26 classes of nine educators and 780 students.

“We are really honored that the US Department of Education has recognized the validity of arts integration as an effective teaching tool outside of the arts in education department,” said Jenny James, YALA Executive Director.

HEART will use arts integration residencies to positively engage students in history learning and provide knowledge necessary to make informed decisions about politics in an environment informed by social media. Additionally, YALA will offer professional development for educators, school leaders, and teaching artists.

The initiative is built upon YALA’s successful [arts-integrated professional development programs](https://www.ya4la.org/programs/curricular-arts-integration) and the solid partnerships forged with Greater New Orleans public school systems during three cycles of multi-million-dollar U.S. DOE arts education grants.

YACS is no stranger to the benefits of arts integration. “Utilizing the arts makes learning fun and sticky,” says Xaviera Ingram, YACS Crocker School Leader. “The various arts forms provide access for students at all levels. It can provide visuals, kinesthetic activities, and tangible connections that help students relate to core content.”

In total, HEART will serve 1,500 students Grades 6-8 in 60 classrooms across seven schools, along with 21 school leaders, and 70 teachers including paraprofessionals and arts staff. The program will also support the training of 12 teaching artists.

While the pilot will launch in Jefferson and Orleans Parishes, HEART will expand to seven schools across three parishes when St. Tammany Parish Schools join the project in Fall 2024. To learn more about YALA’s groundbreaking arts integration programs, visit [www.ya4la.org](https://www.ya4la.org/).

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**About Young Audiences of Louisiana:** Young Audiences of Louisiana (YALA) was founded in 1962 with the mission to inspire, engage, and unite children and communities through education, arts, and culture. Over the last 60 years the organization has grown from presenting school performances of chamber music to our current position as the state’s largest provider of arts-integrated and afterschool programs. Utilizing a wide-range of arts programming, YALA draws upon our region’s strong culture to provide young people with tools to impact their worlds using art. To learn more about our mission, please visit our website at www.ya4la.org.