

2023 Annual Report



Consulting and Training



Culture, Community, and the Classroom



Publishing and Resources

LOCAL LEARNING

- THE NATIONAL NETWORK FOR FOLK ARTS IN EDUCATION

Local Learning envisions a nation of lifelong learners who understand traditional arts and knowledge as critical tools for transformative solutions to the complex challenges of today's world.

To build a more equitable and inclusive world, learners of all ages must purposefully develop the skills embedded in folklife methods to explore local knowledge, thereby recognizing one another's humanity while learning more about themselves and their communities.

—2023 Strategic Plan
Adopted May 23, 2023

<https://locallearningnetwork.org>

A Note from the Executive Director



In 2023, I am proud to report that **Local Learning** . . .

Connects across disciplines, with 2023 conference presentations at the American Folklore Society (AFS), National Art Education Association (NAEA), National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), Oral History Association (OHA), and other state and regional gatherings.

Image from our 2023 AFS workshop, "Learning Tradition, Learning Traditionally: Indigenous Teachers and Allies Examine Pathways to Systemic Educational Transformation." (L-R) Brettagne Aleck (Teacher, Yakima), Nicole Butler-Hooton (Oregon 2021 Teacher of the Year, Confederated Tribes of Siletz & San Carlos Apache), Linda Deafenbaugh (FACTS School), Shelly Craig (Teacher, Yakima), Julie Schillreff (Education Administration), Lisa Rathje (Local Learning).

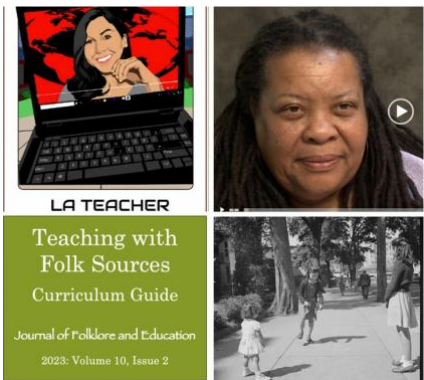


Centers traditional artists' and culture bearers' expertise. We advocate for the inclusion of traditional artists in national plenary speaker roles at conferences like National Heritage Award Fellow Verónica Castillo at NAEA in April. Our Culture, Community, and the Classroom (CCC) program supported teachers and artists in planning and implementing 16 artist residencies and publishing teachers' CCC lessons that connect cultural knowledge to education standards.

"Tree of Life" sculpture by Verónica Castillo at her studio in San Antonio. Photo by Paddy Bowman.

Serves the field through publication of the *Journal of Folklore and Education*. This year's 10th volume "Teaching with Folk Sources" featured a double issue with timely articles and a 5-unit curriculum guide that leads teachers to the rich resources in ethnographic and oral history archives at the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress and in regional archives around the nation.

Image features the cover of the Journal of Folklore and Education 2023: Vol. 10, Issue 2.



Plans strategically for the future resiliency of both our organization and our mission amid social and educational upheaval. Our new 5-year strategic plan is bold, providing an iterative framework that is responsive to and supportive of transformative learning through folk arts in education. We also honored the visionary thinkers who gathered in 1993 to advocate for a national network at our 30th anniversary celebration in September.

All this happens through our small staff because we are actively supporting leadership and program growth nationwide. When you read our journal, attend our programs, and hire the artists and folklorists who participate in our professional development, you contribute to the strength of this network. Almost half our budget goes directly to our co-planners and co-facilitators, the co-designers, artists, and co-dreamers in this work. When we strengthen one classroom, one artist, or one program, the network is strengthened exponentially.



Journal of Folklore and Education

Teaching with Folk Sources

Volume 10 of the *Journal of Folklore and Education* offers two issues packed with resources and content. Expanding mainstream notions that primary sources are historical documents housed in hard-to-access archives, this volume showcases archival items that expand our vision of community, self, the past, the future, pedagogical opportunities—and, yes, history.

[Read it here.](#)



This image of Frances Densmore playing back a recording to Mountain Chief (Blackfoot) in 1916 is from “A Future from the Past,” by David Swenson, Rebecca Engelman, and Troyd Geist (10.1:8-28). Calling on Frances Densmore’s collection of more than 2,500 American Indian songs she recorded between 1907 and 1941, this project repatriates and reintroduces Lakota and Dakota songs to the Standing Rock Reservation. The article is about empowering individuals to reclaim their culture regardless of institutional, financial, educational, or political access or hurdles and also shares strong lesson plans.

The *Journal of Folklore and Education* (ISSN 2573-2072) is a publication of Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education. Volume 10 (2023) featured 11 articles, 5 reviews, and a Curriculum Guide with 5 units. We accepted 68% of submissions, following peer review.

Library of Congress,
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2004667752>

Guest Editor: Alexandra Selassie Antohin; Editors: Paddy Bowman and Lisa Rathje; Managing Editor: Cassie Rosita Patterson; Design: Lisa Rathje; Review Editor: Taylor Dooley Burden

2023 *Journal of Folklore and Education* Editorial Board and Advisory Committee

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Read JFE here: <https://JFEPublications.org>

The *Journal of Folklore and Education* (Vol. 10, Issue 1) is funded, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts and (Vol. 10, Issue 2) by the Library of Congress’s Teaching with Primary Sources program.

Professional Development

In 2023 we facilitated professional development workshops for over 250 educators, folklorists, and artists. Our consultancies included customized programs for university students, teachers, and artists, and we offered presentations for diverse public groups in a variety of formats. Some highlights from the year follow.

Study of traditional arts and their creators contributes not only to students' understanding of culture and community, but also to their ability to think critically, gather and analyze evidence, learn key social-emotional skills, and express their ideas and interpretations through personal creativity.

Partnerships with National Reach



Local Learning continued its 5-year consultancy for the REACH project, funded through a U.S. Department of Education grant awarded to the Distinctive Schools Network and University of Southern Florida PAInT Program, directed by Dr. Denise Davis-Cotton. Lisa Rathje partnered with the Art in Motion School in Chicago to support a Museum Studies professional development workshop in May with visits to three Chicago museums. In addition to planning, we produced a resource guide that informed the learning. In June, REACH leaders visited the Smithsonian and experienced the Folklife Festival and museums to expand their understanding of the importance of museum institutions related to race, equity, arts, and cultural history.

Culture, Community, and the Classroom—Growth and Sustainability



We continue to invest in our New York Folklore and Education Network in collaboration with New York Folklore. Our 6th year of CCC saw an expanded program at two sites: the Capitol and Binghamton regions. Twenty-one artists completed the professional development program, offering folk arts education programming for over 450 students in Upstate NY. Past artist Akilah Briggs-Melvin became a mentor and fieldworker—identifying new artists and facilitating CCC sessions in Binghamton. Public showcases hosted by the Roberson Museum in Binghamton and the Albany Institute offered additional opportunities for sharing culture and building community.

Dissemination of Research and Curriculum



Teaching with Primary Sources is the Library of Congress's premier educational program, focused on helping educators enhance students' critical thinking and analysis skills and content knowledge using the Library's collections of millions of digitized primary sources. The Local Learning team published a Curriculum Guide in JFE; offered professional development with archival materials in Miami, Vermont, and Oklahoma; and presented on the project at national conferences including NCSS (photo left), OHA, and NAEA.

2023 Organizational Highlights

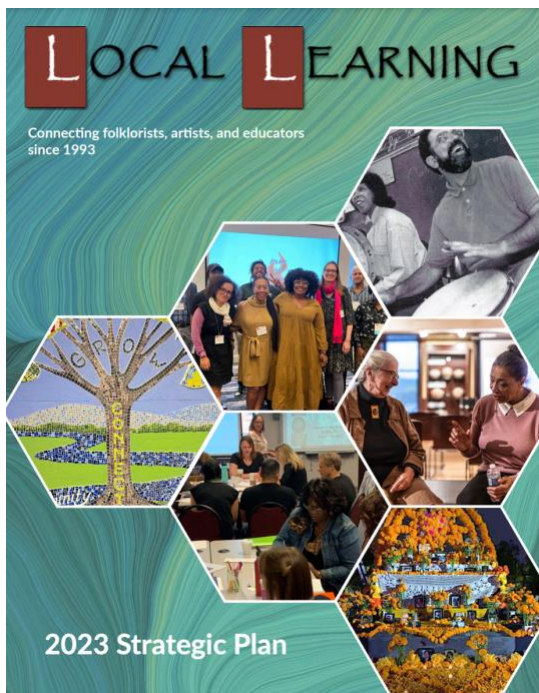
miento realmente, sino regu
stro abuelos y padres a los hijos.
Aurelia Fernandez, Mexican crafts maker



30 Years Serving the Field of Folk Arts in Education

In 1993, a Folk Arts in Education Roundtable at the National Endowment for the Arts explored the intersections of folk arts and education, including its practitioners, pedagogy, toolkits, and potential. Participants crafted a vision for a National Task Force for Folk Arts in Education to support and serve folk arts in education, and, as a result, Local Learning. We celebrated this important anniversary—30 years of Local Learning supporting our national network—by recognizing the aspirational thinkers who envisioned the potential for this work at City Lore, our long-time partner, during a gathering in New York City. We also honored Founding Director Paddy Bowman. “[Folk Arts in the Classroom](#)” came from this 1993 gathering. The last pages include a list of the Working Group and Task Force members whom we honored in September.

And We Celebrate Good News! To honor 30 years of providing resources, training, infrastructure, and advocacy, our Board established a challenge grant. We are so pleased to share that **WE MADE OUR GOAL**. Individual donors, along with our Board, raised almost \$18,000 to support Local Learning and the *Journal of Folklore and Education*. Thank you to our supporters who were a part of marking this important time.



Local Learning Plans and Invests in the Future

Local Learning’s Work is Guided by an Iterative Plan. Many strategic plans read like a map where X marks the destination and step-by-step directions spell out how to get there. Local Learning’s 2023-2028 Strategic Plan acts as a compass, guiding the organization toward its vision in a way that allows for continued responsiveness to the unexpected challenges and opportunities that the coming years will no doubt present. [Read our plan here.](#)

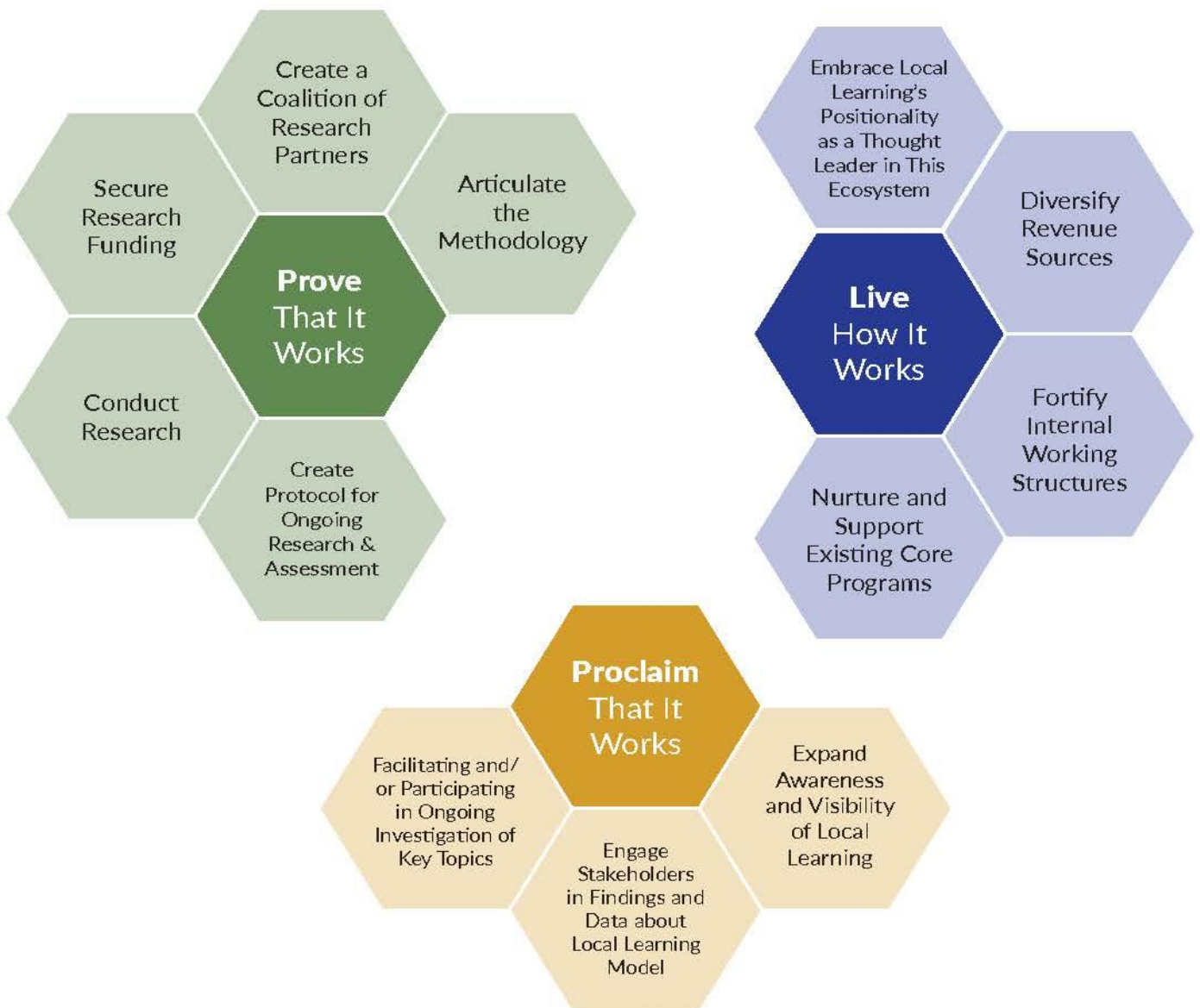
The Board and staff also clarified our values:

Local Learning is people-centered and process-driven.

- To be **people-centered** means that respect, connections, partnership, equity, and inclusion inform all our relationships and collaborations.
- To be **process-driven** means that we work iteratively, with purposeful reciprocity and reflexivity built into our programs.

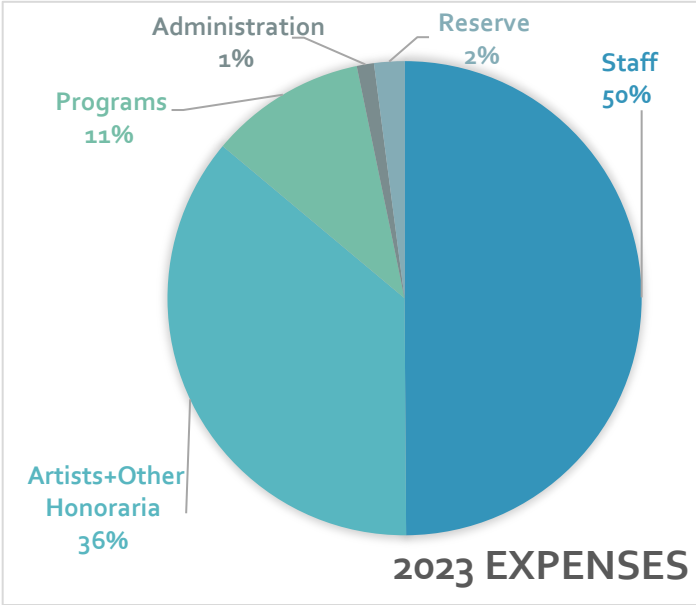
LOCAL LEARNING 2023 Plan on a Page

In its first 30 years, Local Learning has developed a model of inquiry-based ethnographic process that triangulates the expertise of educators, folklorists, and artists to create improved learner engagement and understanding of themselves and others. This strategic plan is grounded in a recognition of that model, dedication to its further codification, and the expansion of its principles of centering people and process. That model is the “it” to which these three strategic directions refer.



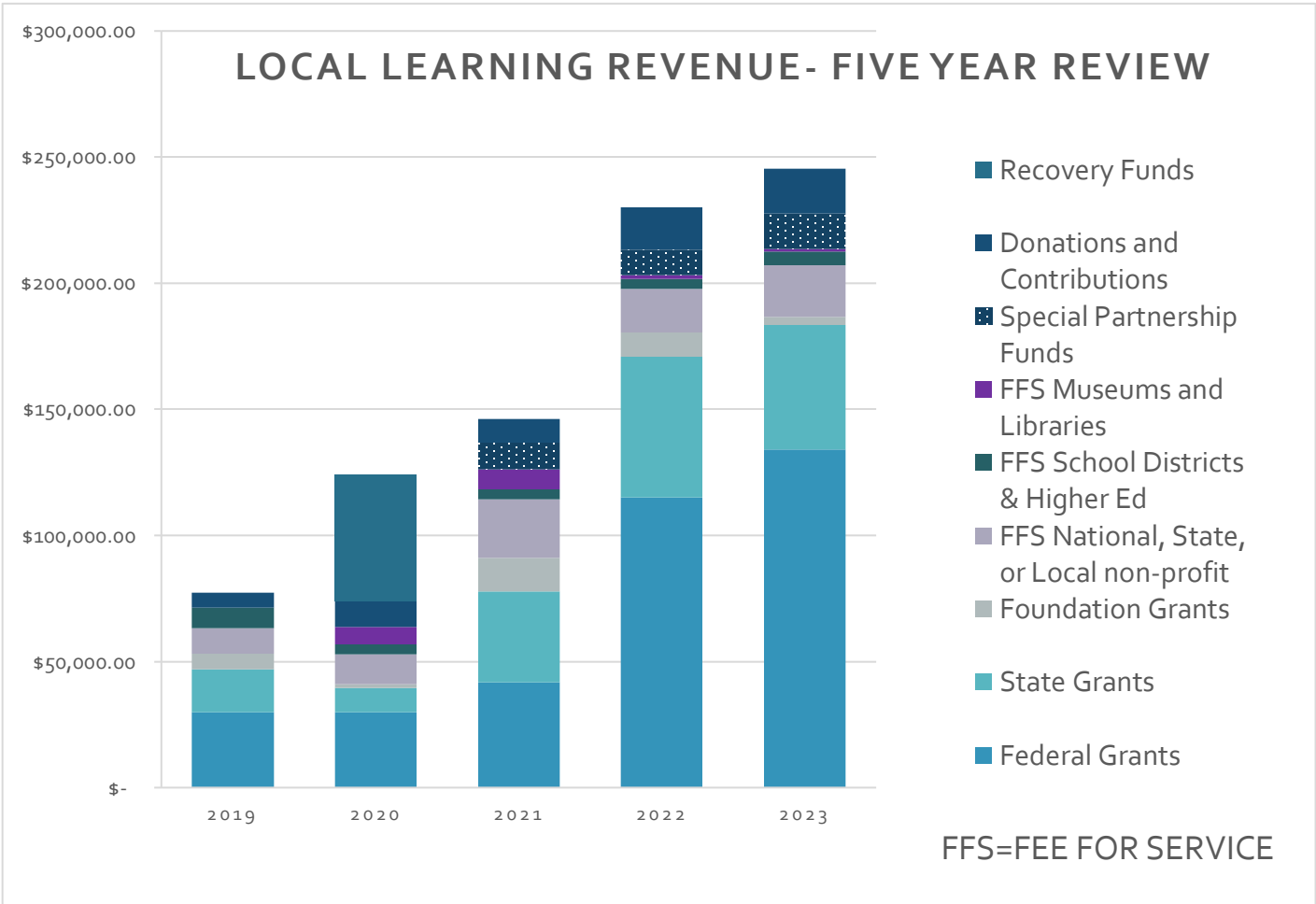
A page from our 2023 Strategic Plan.

Financial Statement



Highlights

- Representing 86% of our expenses, Local Learning continues to invest in our staff and collaborators, including artists. This aligns with our values to center people and relationships in our work. We also know local programming is better and the outcomes are more sustainable when we contract local artists and experts as partners.
- The Board-Directed Reserve supports organizational sustainability and long-term investment. It is currently fully funded for 3 months of expenses.
- The Local Learning budget is growing. Our 2023 income (pending final accounting) was \$245,000, a 10% increase. Our expenses were \$243,690.



Local Learning Board Updates

The Board elected Halle Butvin as Chair at our November meeting during AFS in Portland, OR. We are grateful to Doug Blandy for his service to the as Chair through 2023.

Local Learning Board

Doug Blandy (Past Chair, Ex-officio) is a professor in the School of Planning, Public Policy, and Management at the University of Oregon.

Halle Butvin (Chair) is Director of Special Projects at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.

Lisa L. Higgins (Treasurer) is Director of the Missouri Folk Arts Program.

Ellen McHale (Secretary) is Executive Director of New York Folklore.

Flávia Bastos is a Distinguished Research Professor and Associate Dean in the Graduate School at the University of Cincinnati.

B. Marcus L. Cederström is community curator of Nordic American Folklore at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Marit Dewhurst is Director of Art Education and Professor of Art and Museum Education at The City College of New York.

Minuette Floyd, is a professor of Art Education at the University of South Carolina.

Jean Tokuda Irwin is the Arts Education Program Manager for the Utah Division of Arts & Museums.

Sahar Muradi is Director of Education Programs at City Lore.

Shanendra Nowell is Associate Professor of Secondary Education at Oklahoma State University.

Reese Tanimura is Managing Director of Northwest Folklore.

These **Founding Directors** serve as *Emeritus* Board members. These positions are fully honorific and recognize the significant contributions of these individuals to our mission and organization: Betty Belanus, Amanda Dargan, Maida Owens, Anne Pryor, and Steve Zeitlin.



The **Local Learning staff** are Lisa Rathje, Executive Director and Mira Johnson, New York Folklore in Education Network Coordinator. Paddy Bowman is Founding Director and Senior Consultant.

The Local Learning Board and staff met at the American Folklore Society meeting. (November 2023)

Key Partners and Funders

Strong partnerships are a core value for Local Learning and are necessary for sustaining and nurturing the field of Folk Arts in Education.

2023 Funding and Gifts including Grants, Fees, and Honoraria

National Endowment for the Arts
New York State Council on the Arts
Library of Congress
New York Folklore
Govenar Family Fund of Communities Foundation of Texas
Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures
The Greater Capitol Region Teacher Center
REACH, a program funded by the U.S. Department of Education through the University of South Florida and Distinctive Schools
Perkins Center for the Arts
The Birthplace of Country Music
The Spellman Trust
David Giltinan
Noyes-Krippendorf Fund of the Columbus Foundation
Susan Eleuterio and Tom Sourlis Fund
And over 50 individual donors

2023 Partners who donated in-kind time, space, and services include

The ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes
The Broome-Tioga BOCES
Mid-Hudson Teacher Center
City Lore
JFE Guest Editors and Editorial Board

Local Learning celebrates our 30th Year.

We are pleased to share that we raised \$17,800 through our 2023 Board Challenge Gift in honor of 30 years of Local Learning. Thank you to all our donors. We are grateful.

Thank you for supporting our work to transform learning, build intercultural understanding, and strengthen communities through Folk Arts in Education for the past 30 years.



How can you help Local Learning?

- [Follow us on Facebook](#)
- [Subscribe to our quarterly e-bulletin](#)
- Publicize our work among colleagues
- Volunteer to become a JFE peer reviewer
- Recommend potential networks and resources
- [DONATE](#)

Contact Us to Learn More!

Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education

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<https://locallearningnetwork.org>