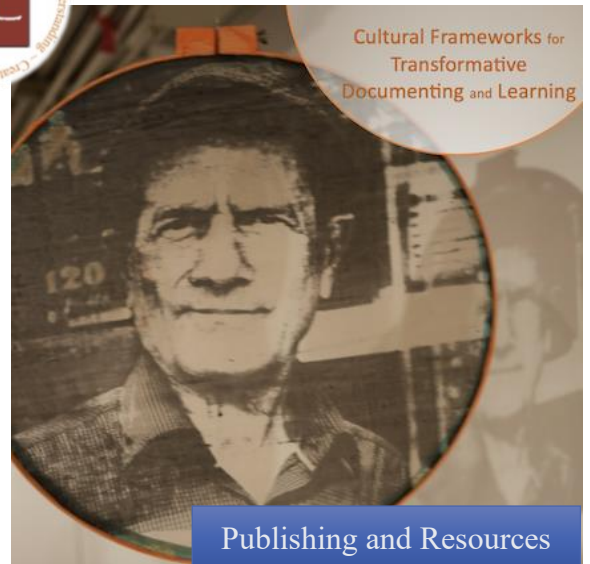


# 2025 Annual Report

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.*

—2023-2028 Strategic Plan

<https://locallearningnetwork.org>

# A Note from the Executive Director

As 2025 comes to a close, I want to thank each of you who have been an important part of our network throughout this unsettling year. **Our connections matter more than ever.** In this annual report I highlight:



Oluwaseyi “Shayee” Awoyomi and Jennifer Grasso-Moise collaborate on a CCC residency. Photo courtesy Ms. Grasso-Moise.

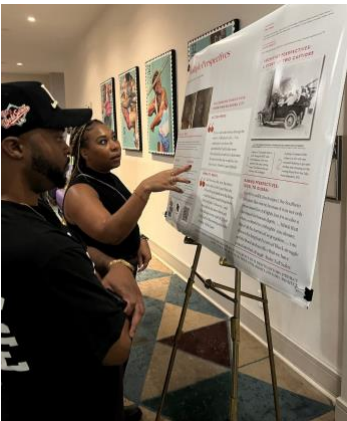
**-Connections to our students**, who are wrestling with challenging, sometimes conflicting messages coming from homes, media, and leadership.

**-Connections to teachers**, who too often feel isolated in their work and want to be seen for their creative, innovative approaches.

**-Connections to artists and tradition bearers**, whose visionary efforts both ground us in community knowledge and promote new thinking to sustain what matters most.

**-Connections to colleagues** who are also friends, as we team together to bolster an infrastructure for doing the good work that is so urgent.

**-Connections to institutions, funders, and the people** within who create opportunities for thriving.



Autumn Brown and Stevie Johnson share with our Teaching with Primary Sources project from the Library of Congress.

The uncertainties of the year are made more bearable because of each of **you**. Thank you for your support and for being a part of the work.

Every year brings new challenges, but we have witnessed and supported educators and artists in 2025 who face mounting efforts to shut down diverse traditions, knowledge, and perspectives in schools. As a National Arts Service Organization, we will continue to build pathways for connection. Through our resources, professional development, and publications, we will continue to contribute to a thriving ecosystem for folk arts in education.

Thank you for your support!

Lisa Rathje, Executive Director



## Want to be more connected to Local Learning?

- [Follow us on Facebook](#) and [Subscribe to our quarterly e-bulletin](#)
- [Read JFE](#) and let us know if you would like to be a peer reviewer
- [DONATE](#)

Presenting with Founding Director Paddy Bowman in Louisville, Kentucky at the National Art Education Association meeting. Look for Local Learning’s presentation at the NAEA Museum Preconference in Chicago in 2026!

# Journal of Folklore and Education

## Cultural Frameworks for Transformative Documenting and Learning

“Storytelling is pedagogy. To inherit culture in the digital age is to honor tradition while embracing innovation, to archive the past while imagining futures, and to make learning a process of shared transformation.”

— Los Herederos, Guest Editors

From teaching with AI to museum curation animated with augmented reality, and from the analog zine to a digital documentation student project, this issue offers educators case studies, activities, and creative entry points to engage the art of documentation in our learning spaces.

[Read it here.](#)

“Reading the Journal articles was helpful in dreaming up the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ for my own project.”

—Community Arts Program Director



We are grateful to the **Documentary Arts Fund for Writers**. 14 authors received an honorarium in 2025.

The *Journal of Folklore and Education* (ISSN 2573-2072) is an annual publication of Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education. Volume 12 (2025) featured 16 articles, 2 notes, and 2 reviews. We accepted 54% of submissions, following peer review.

Guest Editors: Naomi Sturm-Wijesinghe and Mauricio Bayona; Editors: Paddy Bowman and Lisa Rathje; Design: Lisa Rathje; Review Editor: Taylor Dooley Burden

### 2025 Journal of Folklore and Education Editorial Board and Advisory Committee

#### Editorial Board

Flávia Bastos  
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#### Advisory Committee

Benjamin Bean – Social Studies  
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Sarah Bryan – Independent (NC)  
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Barry Dornfeld – Principal, CFAR and  
Part-time lecturer, Goucher College (PA)  
Raienkonnis Edwards – Mohawk  
Filmmaker (NY)  
chloë Fourte – Ethnomusicology  
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and Culture

Pauline Fan – Creative Director, Pusaka  
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Javier Gaston-Greenberg –  
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Bradley Hanson – Director of Folklife,  
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T.C. Owens – Folk Arts Coordinator,  
ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes  
(NY)

Vivian Poey – Professor, Lesley College  
of Art + Design (Cambridge, MA)

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

# Professional Development

*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.*

In 2025 we facilitated professional development workshops in 8 states for educators, folklorists, and artists. Our consultancies included customized programs for museum professionals, teachers, and artists, and we offered presentations for diverse public groups in a variety of formats. Some highlights from the year include:



## Partnerships with National Reach

Local Learning continued its 5-year consultancy for the REACH project, funded through a U.S. Department of Education grant. Lisa Rathje represented Local Learning in New Orleans, Louisiana, at the REACH education think tank.

Our Teaching with Primary Sources collaborations mean joining conversations with educators around the nation. Sometimes this is through teacher professional development (top photo is from our 2025 Tulsa cohort). This year we also met up with Amy Munger, a past JFE author serving as a Fellow of the Library of Congress' Transforming Teaching Initiative (photo), at a TPS event.



## Culture, Community, and the Classroom

We continue to invest in our New York Folklore and Education Network in collaboration with New York Folklore. Long Island Traditions hosted our 8<sup>th</sup> year of CCC which created beautiful teacher/artist connections (see pg. 2 photo). And CCC is expanding, thanks to our Director of Learning Networks and Training, Mira Johnson! Our Wisconsin program kicked off with a virtual workshop on Student Health and Wellbeing from a Cultural Lens, and then our CCC workshop in Madison featured National Heritage Fellow Karen Ann Hoffman sharing about her raised beadwork and local Indigenous traditions with participating teachers and artists (photo).



## New Opportunities for Learning and Sharing

In partnership with Folk Arts and Cultural Treasures Charter School (FACTS) and with lead support from the William Penn Foundation, we are offering a two-year professional development series. Teaching artists and teachers came together to explore what it means to be a culturally responsive Teaching Artist, build new connections across Philadelphia's arts education community, and envision a thriving future for arts education in Philadelphia (photo).



Paddy Bowman was an invited faculty member of the Mississippi Whole Schools Institute, attended by 300 teachers, administrators, and artists in Tupelo. Additionally, we produced the Local Learning Guide to the National Folk Festival for the Mississippi Arts Commission and the National Council for Traditional Arts that was distributed to schools throughout the Jackson region and beyond.

# 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 two new Teaching with Primary Sources guides in 2025.

## *Civil Rights History Project Guide*

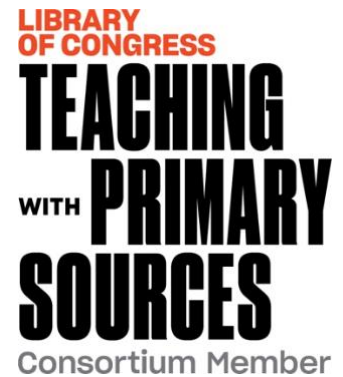
This guide to the Civil Rights History Project of the Library of Congress is written for teachers to introduce the collection and to offer a few points of entry for educators and their students.

## *Seneca Social Dances and Songs Lessons (Yöedza'ge:kha' Ha'degaënogeh)*

Gain a deeper understanding of how Seneca social dances and songs reflect the values, beliefs, and traditions of the Seneca community with these lessons written by Rachael Wolfe, Salamanca City Central School District.

We are grateful for all who came to our Teaching with Folk Sources workshop in Atlanta on October 18th at the American Folklore Society and Oral History Association conferences. Confirmed speakers included Lee Ann Potter, Director of Professional Learning and Outreach Initiatives at the Library of Congress; Monica Mohindra, Director of the Veterans History Project; Dr. View, Assistant Professor of Creative Practice in Popular Music at The Ohio State University and founder of *Fire in Little Africa*, a 21-track hip hop album signed to Motown Records and project that engaged primary sources from the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre; and Hayden Haynes (Seneca, Deer Clan), Director at Onöhsagwë:de' Cultural Center/Seneca-Iroquois National Museum. Due to the government shutdown, Lee Ann Potter ultimately could not present and other Federal employees including American Folklife Center partner Guha Shankar were missed, but the Local Learning team which included Andy Kolovos and Mary Wesley (Vermont Folklife) and Sarah Milligan and Autumn Brown (Oklahoma Oral History Research Program) brought thoughtful updates to our revised agenda that crafted a meaningful learning experience for attendees.

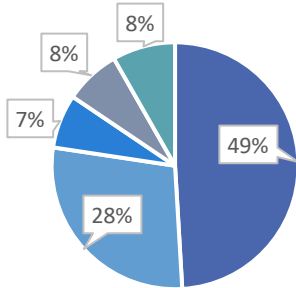
Over the course of the day, we had ~75 people attending the workshop. The evaluations highlighted ways the workshop was meaningful, including, "Before this workshop I thought oral histories were only studied in universities and historical societies, but now I see how they can be applied everywhere!"



- Learn how to activate student research
- Meet like-minded educators from around the nation
- Build standards-connected lessons with oral history and ethnographic primary sources
- Remember why you fell in love with teaching!

# Financial Statement

2025 Expenses

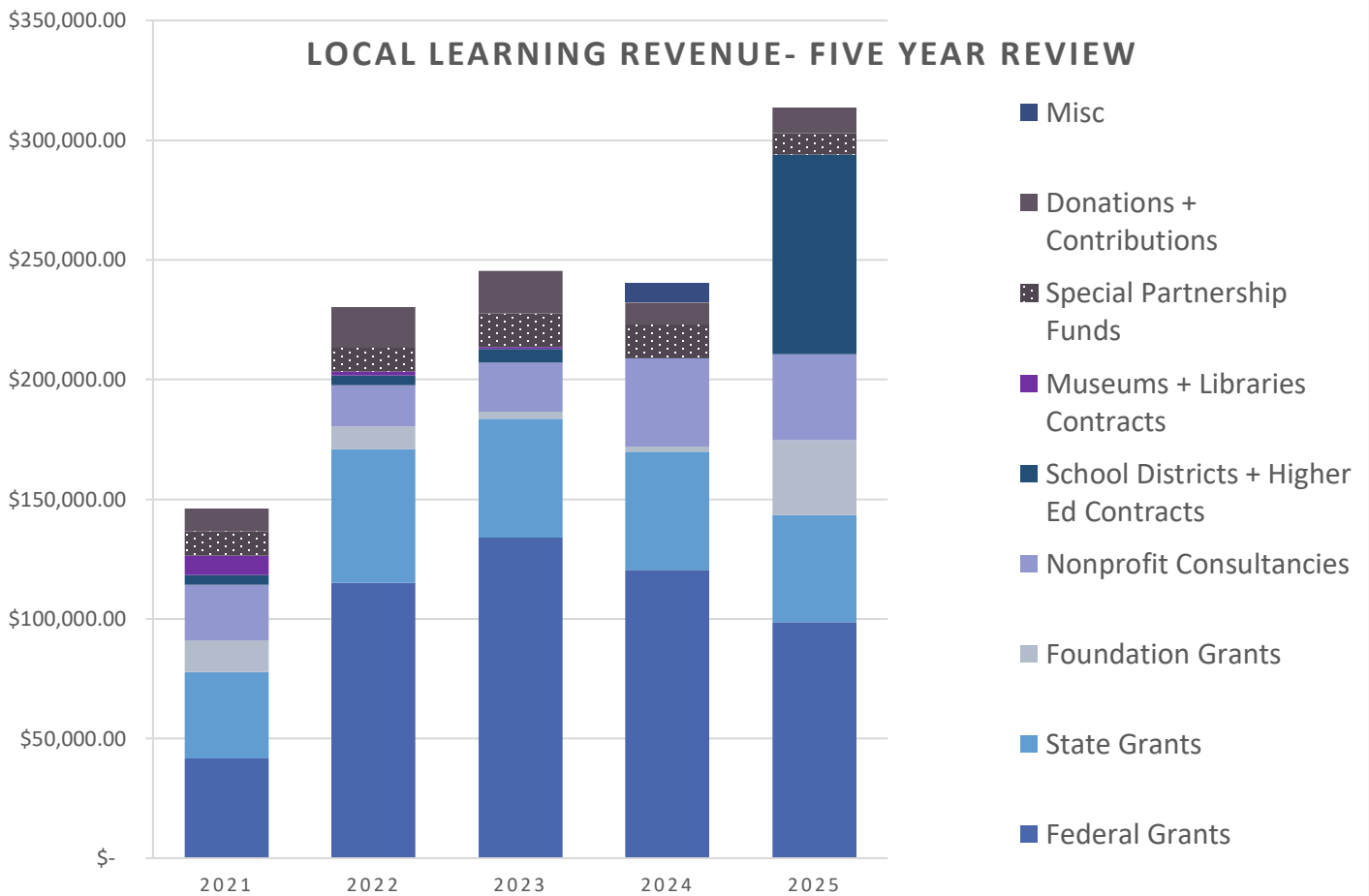


- Staff
- Artists+Other Honoraria
- Other Program Costs
- Administration
- Reserve

## Highlights

- 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.
- We received a competitive 2025 NYSCA Reserve Fund Grant (\$22,500) from the New York Foundation for the Arts to start our Opportunity Reserve. The Board-Directed Reserve supports organizational sustainability and is fully funded for 3 months of expenses.
- The Local Learning 2025 income was \$316,087, with \$51,411 deferred through 2026 supporting sustainability. Our expenses were \$250,351.

LOCAL LEARNING REVENUE- FIVE YEAR REVIEW



# Local Learning Board Updates

Reese Tanimura was elected Chair at our October meeting at AFS in Atlanta, and will serve two years in this role.

## Local Learning Board

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

**Reese Tanimura** (Chair) is Managing Director of Northwest Folklore.

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

**Jean Tokuda Irwin** (Secretary) recently retired as the Arts Education Program Manager for the Utah Division of Arts & Museums.

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

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

**Maxwell Kofi Donkor** is an African Master Drummer, Cultural Educator, and Director of Kofi & Sankofa African Drum & Dance Ensemble.

**Minuette Floyd** is Professor of Art Education at the University of South Carolina.

**Ian Hallagan** is an independent folklorist in Nashville, Tennessee.\*\*

**Rosemary Hathaway** is Professor Emerita of English at West Virginia University.

**Sahar Muradi** is Director of Education Programs at City Lore.

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

**Cecelia Ottenweller** is a Cultural Strategy and Inclusion Consultant based in Houston, Texas.\*\*

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.



\*\*Started terms in October, 2025.

The **Local Learning staff** are Lisa Rathje, Executive Director, and Mira Johnson, Director of Learning Networks and Training. Paddy Bowman is Founding Director and Senior Consultant.

Local Learning Board members, virtual and in Atlanta at our October Board Meeting.

# 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.

## 2025 Funding and Gifts including Grants, Fees, and Honoraria

National Endowment for the Arts  
New York State Council on the Arts  
Library of Congress  
Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage  
New York Folklore  
Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures  
Folk Arts Cultural Treasures School, with William Penn Foundation  
New York Foundation for the Arts  
Documentary Arts and the Govenar Family Fund  
REACH, a program funded by the U.S. Department of Education  
Full Service Community School El Centro  
Perkins Center for the Arts  
Rochester Area Community Foundation  
Mississippi Arts Commission  
David Giltinan  
Noyes-Krippendorf Fund  
The Spellman Trust  
*And over forty individual and household donors.*

## 2025 Partner donations of in-kind time, space, & services

Long Island Traditions  
City Lore  
JFE Guest Editors, Editorial Board, and 2025 Advisory Committee

A Note.

We are grateful for the support of nonprofit partners, foundations, and individuals in 2025—this funding was crucial when Federal Funding became unstable. Local Learning is committed to our mission, our values, and the people we center in every program.

**Thank you** for supporting our work to transform learning, build intercultural understanding, and strengthen communities through Folk Arts in Education since 1993.

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Local Learning:  
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<https://locallearningnetwork.org>

