

## **MAY NEWSLETTER**

### **CEI SPOTLIGHTS LITERACY**

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### **Professional Learning Inspires Teachers Nationwide** *Arts-Integrated ELA and Math Literacy for Students with IEPs*

CEI Arts Education's nationally recognized **CEI MERIDIAN** program will be showcased at its national arts education conference **CEI MERIDIAN 2025** on June 26-27 (see announcement below).

Now in its fourth year, CEI MERIDIAN works with classroom teachers of grades K-2 students with IEPs in grades K-5 from New York City (NY), Rochester (NY), Baltimore (MD), Bridgeport (CT) and San Juan (PR).



**The program teaches the value of utilizing a highly differentiated, arts-integrated approach.** Through professional learning workshops, PLC sessions, project-modeling videos, and access to an innovative, differentiated curricula, teachers learn how to utilize music and visual art as effective instructional strategies to directly teach literacy and math skills. All programming is held virtually.

CEI MERIDIAN is also a research study and external evaluator Metis Associates has noted statistically significant results regarding increases in student and teacher outcomes. CEI Meridian is funded by an Assistance for Arts Education (AAE) grant from the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education of the United States Department of Education.

# ceiMERIDIAN 2025

## NATIONAL ARTS EDUCATION CONFERENCE ON ZOOM

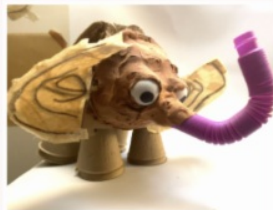
**Thu, June 26 - Fri, Jun 27**

**FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS OF K-2 STUDENTS WITH IEPs**

The Value of Arts Integration and Use of Differentiated Instructional Strategies in Music and Visual Art to Directly Teach Literacy and Math

Click [here](#) for more information or to register!

The **CEI MERIDIAN 2025** professional learning conference will bring inspiring lectures and hands-on workshops to classroom teachers of grades K-2 students with IEPs (and K-2 General Education teachers) from across the country. Participants will gain an understanding of the effectiveness of utilizing an arts-integrated approach and learn four (4) highly differentiated, easy-to-implement projects in **VISUAL ART** and **MUSIC** that directly teach **LITERACY (ELA)** and **MATH**.



The nationally recognized **CEI MERIDIAN** curricula enables teachers to differentiate instruction at each step of every project to challenge every student at their level — ***from students working towards the standards with cognitive challenges to those performing on grade level with emotional challenges.***

The **CEI MERIDIAN 2025** conference is part of the **CEI MERIDIAN** program which has yielded statistically significant results regarding increases in student and teacher outcomes, and is funded by an *Assistance for Arts Education (AAE)* grant from the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education of The United States Department of Education.

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## Esports Journalism

**CEI ESPORTS** is an innovative program designed to bridge the gap between traditional education and the burgeoning field of Esports.



**The Esports curriculum incorporates journalistic writing to help students build not only their literacy skills**, but cultivate their voices, using writing as a self-reflective tool. After each gaming session, students respond to prompts about teamwork, handling pressure, resolving conflict, and developing a growth mindset. These journal entries help them connect their in-game experiences to real-life values, encouraging self-awareness, empathy, and communication—all core components of literacy and emotional development.

In parallel, Esports introduces students to the world of Esports journalism. Students write game recaps, player profiles, opinion pieces, and tournament previews. They learn how to research, interview, draft, edit, and publish stories—building their confidence as writers while developing skills in structure, clarity, and digital media. Their articles are shared across school platforms, giving students a chance to see their work in the spotlight.

By combining emotional development and self reflection with journalism, our Esports program ensures that literacy isn't a separate subject—it's woven into the fabric of every game played, every match watched, and every story told. CEI Esports is not just training better gamers—it's developing thoughtful communicators and storytellers prepared for a digital world.



## Read to Lead

### *Igniting Literacy and Leadership at Leaders of Tomorrow*

**READ TO LEAD (RTL)** is a digital platform that promotes literacy by placing students in virtual leadership roles, like a community center director or head pharmacist, where they build decision-making skills through authentic, job-related reading tasks. The RTL program builds a bridge between literacy, emotional development, and career exploration.



**CEI successfully implemented a five-month pilot of its RTL program at the Leaders of Tomorrow MS 370 in the Bronx.** This pilot represents CEI's dedication to blending academic rigor with real-world relevance to boost student engagement and learning outcomes. During the pilot, students were immersed in a virtual workplace environment, completing formative assessments and responding to decision-making prompts requiring critical

thinking and empathy.

CEI plans to analyze student assessments in the coming months to evaluate growth in reading fluency and comprehension, which will provide valuable data on the program's academic impact. Feedback from students indicated a high level of enjoyment and a sense of achievement as they tracked their progress over time. The success of this pilot underscores CEI's mission to cultivate student agency, improve literacy outcomes, and prepare learners for future academic and career success through innovative programming like Read to Lead.

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## **Benchmarks Program and Exhibition Empowers Students** *Aligns with ELA, Social Studies, and Art Standards*

CEI Arts Education's **BENCHMARKS** program empowers students to create murals on benches to inspire their communities. These benches are exhibited every summer in NYC parks citywide.

This year, CEI Arts Education is pleased to celebrate 20 powerful benches painted by over 550 student artists from the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Staten Island.

These benches aren't just beautiful, they reflect what matters most to the students who created them. Each student-selected theme gives students a chance to express themselves on issues that they care about — topics like caring for the environment, stopping cyberbullying, and strengthening our communities.

As part of the Benchmarks program, CEI Teaching artists worked with students to select and research their topics, write position pieces, and make connections to real-world issues. The process aligns with the NYC Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts and the NYS Standards in ELA, Social Studies, and Visual Art, making this a meaningful academic and artistic experience. Overall, the program brings together creativity, community, and student voices, connecting with communities and beautifying the city.





# cei BENCHMARKS

A CITYWIDE STUDENT ART EXHIBIT IN NYC PARKS

## June 7 - September 14, 2025

**CEI BENCHMARKS** is a citywide NYC Parks exhibition of 20 inspiring murals on benches created by NYC public school students. These benches explore a wide range of themes from the importance of caring for the environment to cyberbullying.



**Starting June 7th, the 20 benches will be on view in parks citywide:**

**Bronx:** **Rev. T. Wendell Foster Park** (North Side of E. 165 Street bet. Jerome and River Aves)

**Brooklyn:** **Prospect Park Parade Ground** (Caton Ave at Argyle Road)

**Manhattan:** **Thomas Jefferson Park** (East 114th Street between Pleasant Ave & First Ave)

**Staten Island:** **Clove Lakes Park** (Clove Rd between Waldron Avenue and Victory Boulevard)



Benchmarks supporters include NYC Parks, NYCDOE, New York City Council, Prospect Park Alliance, SFDS, LeNoble Lumber, EMS Group, Janovic, Loconsolo Paints, Ultrasite, and Local Man with a Truck,

For more information about **CEI BENCHMARKS**, click [here](#) or to donate click [here](#).



EDUCATION • INNOVATION • EQUITY

The Center for Educational Innovation (CEI) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. CEI believes the

school should be the center and driving force of public education, innovation, and reform. Every child deserves a quality education. With a focus on equity and innovation, CEI works directly with school leaders, teachers, students, and families to create high-performing schools in under-resourced communities to help children succeed.

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