



# Virginia Art Education Association

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*To promote, support and advance visual arts education through professional development, leadership, research and service.*

March 1, 2026

Dear School Administrator:

I am pleased to announce that the 2026 Virginia Art Education Association Professional Development Conference will be held in Richmond, Virginia, October 22–24, 2026.

This annual gathering brings together up to 300 visual arts, design, and media arts educators from across the Commonwealth, including PreK–12 art teachers, school division leaders, higher education faculty, museum educators, and preservice teachers. As the premier professional learning event for art educators in Virginia, the VAEA Conference offers the most comprehensive and relevant professional development opportunity in our field. With more than 50 successful conferences hosted to date, this year's event promises to be both inspiring and impactful.

The conference will feature over 100 sessions highlighting current research, innovative practices, and hands-on workshops designed for immediate classroom application. All programming is dedicated exclusively to art education, ensuring meaningful, content-specific learning that directly supports teaching and student success.

In today's climate of high-stakes accountability, we know the arts play a critical role in developing creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills in our students. I respectfully ask for your support in encouraging art educators to continue strengthening their professional knowledge and instructional practice by providing release time and assistance with conference participation, travel, and lodging when possible.

Registration will open in August. Conference details, including fees and the full session schedule, will be available at [www.vaea.org](http://www.vaea.org). Please feel free to contact me at [Ldrake421@gmail.com](mailto:Ldrake421@gmail.com), if you would like additional information.

We look forward to offering a meaningful and timely professional learning experience for Virginia's art educators. Thank you for your leadership and partnership as we work together to ensure a high-quality education for all students.

Sincerely,

*Leigh Drake*

Dr. Leigh Drake  
Virginia Art Education Association President