

September 15, 2015

Chairman John Kline  
Committee on Education & the Workforce  
United States House of Representatives

Chairman Lamar Alexander  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions  
United States Senate

Ranking Member Bobby Scott  
Committee on Education & the Workforce  
United States House of Representatives

Ranking Member Patty Murray  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions  
United States Senate

Dear Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Scott, Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

As you begin the process of conferencing the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we, the undersigned organizations, strongly urge you to ensure that the final legislation includes the Senate-passed Literacy and Arts Education program, which would support initiatives similar to the current Arts in Education grant program. Title V, Part H, Section 5801 of S. 1177 authorizes Literacy and Arts Education programs, which promote both arts education for disadvantaged students and students with disabilities and literacy programs serving children in need. We are extremely gratified to see this strong support for arts education, and we encourage you to maintain it throughout the conference process.

The language in S.1177 specifically authorizes support for professional development for arts educators, teachers, and principals; development and dissemination of instructional materials and arts-based educational programming, including online resources, in multiple arts disciplines; and community and national outreach activities that strengthen and expand partnerships among schools, local educational agencies, communities, or national centers for the arts. The inclusion of this language in the final reauthorization bill will demonstrate a deep commitment to comprehensive student learning and help to ensure students gain the advantages that a comprehensive arts education can offer.

For more than 15 years, the Arts in Education grant program at the U.S. Department of Education has provided critical support for emerging education models that have shown improved learning in high-poverty schools. These model initiatives and partnerships are significantly impacting large numbers of students and educators, with arts in education grants having served more than 230 congressional districts in 33 states.

Professional Development for Arts Educators (PDAE) grants identify innovative models to improve instruction for arts specialists and classroom teachers. The PDAE grants program has supported a total of 82 projects that serve as national models for effective arts education professional development. Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination (AEMDD) grants strengthen student learning through standards-based arts education and integration of arts instruction into other subject areas. The program has funded a total of 184 projects, including rigorous evaluation of arts education strategies that can impact schools and communities nationwide. *Promise and Progress*, the U.S. Department of Education's 10-year review of the program, found that grantees produce valuable research-based models for improving student achievement. Evaluation and national dissemination of project results multiply the impact of this federal investment, and a national program competition supports national level, high-quality arts education projects and programs for children and youth, with special emphasis on serving students from low-income families and students with disabilities.

The Tennessee Arts Commission's FY 2010 AEMDD Grant of \$1 million brought together teachers as learners, collaborators, facilitators, and reflectors in order to improve instruction and impact student achievement by making arts-based and arts integrated learning a critical component of every child's educational experience in four Knoxville Pre-K–5 elementary schools. This initiative, called Arts360°, included year-round professional development and mentoring structured around inquiry-based reflection strategies that deepened and improved collaboration among 62 generalist teachers, arts specialists, and teaching artists working with more than 1,000 students.

Another FY 2010 grantee, the Arts Impact Dissemination and Expansion project, utilized a four-year \$1.1 million grant to increase and strengthen arts education in 20 schools across the state of Washington. This project

raised student achievement in math and reading; expanded and replicated the state's Arts Impact model in three regions of the state; strengthened K–5 standards-based arts education; improved student academic performance associated with the arts, including the achievement of rural students and those in groups traditionally identified as low performing; and developed evaluation tools and project results for further replication statewide and nationally.

Through a 2010 four-year, \$1.15 million AEMDD grant, Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts partnered with Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia and the American Institute for Research to develop, evaluate, and disseminate arts-integrated math teaching strategies for pre-K and kindergarten. This project both advanced arts learning and had a profound impact toward achieving STEM-related education goals for young children, increasing students' math rank by 7-8 percentiles and providing high quality classroom-based professional development for teachers that increased their use of arts integrated strategies.

Finally, the Saint Paul (Minnesota) Public Schools' district-wide initiative, DigitalWorks, is designed to advance understanding of effective ways to integrate media arts into core academic curricula. Through DigitalWorks, the district is implementing a four-year, FY 2013 AEMDD Grant to create and deliver a cohesive series of a research- and standards-based curriculum units, formative and summative assessment tools, and corresponding professional development modules that integrate media arts into existing Math and Writing/English Language Arts (ELA) curricula in grades three through eight.

On behalf of children throughout our country – particularly those in disadvantaged communities – we thank you for your dedication to improving our nation's education system. We are strong believers in the benefits of arts learning opportunities and of the unique value of federal support through the Arts in Education program. We look forward to working with you as the reauthorization process continues and would be happy to provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

American Alliance of Museums  
Americans for the Arts  
Association of Art Museum Directors  
Association of Performing Arts Presenters  
Dance/USA  
Educational Theatre Association  
Fractured Atlas  
Future of Music Coalition  
League of American Orchestras  
Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education  
National Art Education Association  
National Assembly of State Arts Agencies  
National Dance Education Organization  
National Performance Network  
OPERA America  
Performing Arts Alliance  
The Recording Academy  
Theatre Communications Group