

May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Dear School Board President,

This month, schools and districts across the state celebrate [Arts Education Month](#). On behalf of ArtsEd Washington, I would like to take this opportunity to extend a special thank you for your leadership and commitment to education. We appreciate the hard work and dedication of all School Directors to address, and find solutions to, the complex issues districts and schools continue to face.

Because a complete education cannot be defined without the arts, and because we know School Directors are committed to ensuring that students across your district have every opportunity to receive their complete education, we invite you to join us in the arts education movement, ensuring equitable delivery of arts learning to every student at every school.

The arts (defined as dance, music, theatre and visual arts) are included in our state's definition of basic education as a core content area; however the unfortunate reality is that many students in our state are *still* not receiving an equitable arts education. As you face tough decisions ahead, we urge you to avoid making disproportionate cuts to the arts, and eliminating or drastically impacting the infrastructure for delivery of your arts programs. To deprive your district's students of their access to arts learning will greatly impact their ability and potential to contribute, and be competitive, in our rapidly evolving and global society where creativity is a cornerstone to success.

In fact, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan recently urged the nation to avoid making "short-sided cuts" in education specifically naming "eliminating instruction in the arts" as one of the cuts to avoid. In addition, a recent arts education report, [Re-Investing in Arts Education: Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools](#), just released by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, notes arts education as "an effective tool in school-wide reform and in fixing some of our biggest educational challenges."

A complete and balanced K-12 curriculum that includes standards-based arts education as part of everyday learning has proven to foster well-rounded graduates who enter college and the workforce with creative skills and a competitive edge. Study after study continues to show that arts education teaches creative problem-solving and cultural awareness, offers multiple pathways to understanding for different learners, and increases connections and engagement between teachers, students, and the supportive community that surrounds them.

Credible research has also demonstrated consistently better outcomes for students highly involved in the arts including better grades, less likelihood of dropping out, and more positive attitudes about school. These same studies show that high levels of arts participation make the greatest difference for economically disadvantaged students.

As we seek to develop the leaders we need for a future we cannot predict, we cannot afford to define a complete education without the arts. We must work together towards solutions that ensure arts learning as part of students' complete education — so that every student has equitable access to arts learning during school hours. With *creativity and innovation* as the new watch words in almost every career field, these skills are needed to prepare *all* our children for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As a School Director, you have and will continue to play a pivotal role in the decisions that impact and can help to safeguard arts learning for students in your district. To assist you in your efforts to ensure arts education in your schools, we are pleased to serve as your statewide resource and can provide you with additional information including research studies, success stories, and details of programs that are helping support principals and teachers in delivering the arts to their students.

We also would like the opportunity to highlight your district's arts education successes and efforts. For example, if your Board of Directors issued a [resolution](#) supporting *Arts Education Month*, we would be pleased to post it on our website and recognize your commitment to arts learning for your district's students. You may send an electronic copy to [office@artsedwashington.org](mailto:office@artsedwashington.org). You can also follow our updates on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), as well as find additional tools and resources on our website at [www.artsedwashington.org](http://www.artsedwashington.org).

Finally, please consider ArtsEd Washington as your arts education partner as you continue in your work ahead and don't hesitate to contact me at 206.441.4501 or [una@artsedwashington.org](mailto:una@artsedwashington.org) if I can provide you with information or answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Una McAlinden

**Executive Director**  
**ArtsEd Washington**