



**THE CENTER FOR ARTS EDUCATION**  
Developing potential. Inspiring success.

**Laurie Tisch Sussman**  
**Chairman, The Center for Arts Education**

**Testimony on Arts Education**  
**City Council Hearing**

**April 8, 2003**

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Councilwoman Moskowitz, and members of the Council, thank you for inviting me to speak today. My name is Laurie Tisch Sussman. I am the founding chairman of The Center for Arts Education, a nonprofit, public/private partnership committed to restoring, stimulating and sustaining quality arts education in New York City. I am pleased to be on the panel today with many of our colleagues who are providing arts education in our schools.

The Center was founded seven years ago, as part of the Annenberg Foundation's Challenge to the Nation for education reform. At the Center for Arts Education, we identify, fund and support exemplary arts partnerships with schools and cultural institutions, as well as parent and family programs. Additionally, we administer a school-to-career internship program placing high school students in arts-related industries. In order that our programs have systemic impact, the Center works in close collaboration with the New York City Departments of Education and Cultural Affairs and the United Federation of Teachers in an interagency effort.

To date, the Center for Arts Education has awarded more than \$26 million to New York City public schools and cultural organizations for arts education and has helped leverage \$225 million in public funds through Project ARTS. Since

we began, we have funded 270 schools, served 100,000 children and worked with 229 cultural institutions and organizations.

One way we invest in education is through our arts partnership grants. These are flexible, multi-year grants awarded to schools on a competitive basis to form arts partnerships with cultural and community-based organizations. These partnerships are designed by each school team, but they are framed by principles the Center believes are the basis of strong arts education programs and that align with existing school improvement plans. They include instruction in specific arts, as well as the incorporation of the arts into core curricular subjects such as math, reading, history and science. They also provide extensive professional development for teachers and teaching artists, and evaluation of the arts program and student learning.

As the Mayor and Chancellor have often stated, parent involvement in their children's education is vital to achievement. Our Parents As Arts Partners program, funded by the Departments of Cultural Affairs and Education, has opened school doors to many parents. This year, 149 schools collaborating with more than 100 cultural organizations received grants for programs that let parents experience for themselves what their children are learning in class and to visit cultural organizations across the City.

To link education with future employment, the Center's Career Development Program creates outstanding opportunities for high school students and educators to participate in school-to-career activities in New York City's 13 billion dollar sector of arts and related industries. This program has placed students in over 60 work sites.

All of the programs and partnerships which I have discussed lead to one of our major goals, sharing information. To share the lessons we have learned, 19 schools are receiving two-year Leadership grants, so that they and their cultural partners can develop adaptable models of arts programs that may be used by other schools. Many of these schools are described in ***Promising Practices: the Arts and School Improvement***, our publication, developed in collaboration with the UFT, which features model programs and recommendations for successful arts programs that schools can adapt.

Success is not achieved without obstacles. Some of the roadblocks we have encountered working in the school system include the turn-over of principals, the need for more time to plan, reflect and assess programs; and the pressure of high stakes testing, which takes time away from teacher development and arts classes. Additionally, in some schools, there is a lack of experience and understanding about how to incorporate arts education as an integral part of the school curriculum.

This is a challenging time for the City's schools. However, it is also a time of opportunity. The Center has harnessed public and private resources to benefit arts education, and we urge the Department of Education and the City Council to do so as well. It is good public policy. We suggest the following as recommendations for arts education in the City.

1) The Department of Education should develop a citywide arts curriculum to help schools and cultural organizations focus teaching and learning in the arts. The curriculum can build upon the previously developed NYC Frameworks for the Arts and the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts.

2) The Department of Education should revise, with cultural organizations, the criteria used by cultural organizations that serve the schools. There should be a set of standards for programs and professional development, which would guide the improvement of those programs.

3) As the foundation of the school systems arts education plan, Project ARTS funds should be allocated equitably to all schools for staff and programs.

4) If cuts must be made due to the budget crisis, the arts should *not be* cut disproportionately. At its high point of \$75 million, Project ARTS was less than three quarters of one percent of the Department of Education's total budget.

The Project ARTS allocation leverages a significant amount of private money and resources, which makes it a great investment in our children's future. It is an investment that, in addition to its immediate impact, builds future audiences for New York's cultural institutions.

We have all learned many lessons since the fiscal crisis of the 1970s when the arts were almost totally removed from our public schools. It has taken more than 20 years to employ significant numbers of new arts teachers, institute "per capita" arts spending and move towards every child receiving arts education once again. With the public and private sectors working together, arts education has made impressive gains: from increased employment of arts teachers in the school system to excellent arts programs provided by the cultural community.

This City has outstanding cultural resources. We believe it is our obligation to link those resources to student learning. We urge you not to look at City funding and programs in isolation, but to continue building bridges between the school and cultural communities -- with the goal that every single public school student has an education that includes the arts. We look forward to working with the City to attain this goal. Thank you.