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STATEMENT ON THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RELEASE OF THE ANNUAL ARTS IN SCHOOLS REPORT

*BY RICHARD KESSLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - March 6, 2008, New York, NY - The Center for Arts Education recognizes the good work done by the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) in conducting an analysis of arts offerings in the city's public schools that went into the release of the "Annual Arts in Schools Report" today. The report is an important first step towards providing the public with helpful information in evaluating schools and the level of arts education offerings that public school children receive.

However, the headline must read that our New York City public school students are not receiving a well rounded education, with only 29% of students in middle school surveyed citywide receiving the minimum state arts requirements and only 4% of the elementary schools surveyed offering the four required arts forms in every grade in the 2006-2007 school year. New Yorkers, like most Americans, believe that good schools offer children the opportunity to learn in all essential areas including the arts. Parents and teachers particularly know that the arts are essential to developing the whole child and that the arts are central to providing a well-rounded education. In our City of New York, the arts capital of the world, the majority of our elementary and middle school students do not appear to meet what are the most minimal state requirements.

According to the data released, approximately 20% of the schools surveyed had no licensed arts teachers whatsoever in the previous school year (2006-2007), which totals to more than 200 schools. Further, as the report is a baseline reflecting the past academic year, it is very likely that the mid-year cuts to the budget, and the pressure exerted on principals to improve their school's grade on the School Progress Reports (a grade that is primarily derived from standardized tests in reading and math), will negatively affect even further arts education offerings this and next school year. And as these findings were not in the overall grade determination issued to schools as part of the School Progress Reports, it has not yet been made clear how schools and principals will be held accountable on any practical basis for meeting the minimum state requirements. With the elimination of Project Arts, cuts to the school budget, a lack of licensed arts teachers, and many school administrators lacking in the skills necessary to administer the arts, we may be looking at a perfect storm brewing for arts education.

Therefore, CAE and indeed the entire city must ask how the arts will really count?

It is important that in the future a larger percentage of schools are included in the reporting (only 1079 out of over 1400 schools were included in this report, a much smaller percentage than the recent arts education census conducted across the State of New Jersey). We must also note that a rigorous comparison between last year's data and this year's data will be critical to understanding how the arts are faring with all of the changes that have taken place to the school system this year.

Since 1996, New York State has had a minimum set of state requirements that, if adhered to, would be a crucial first step to providing our children with the skills and experiences they need to prepare for their futures. The report released today represents a clarion call for the NYCDOE, the chancellor, principals, educators, elected officials, parents, civic leadership and others to join forces in making the real reforms necessary to ensure that all the city's children receive a well-rounded education that includes the arts.

The Center for Arts Education (CAE) is committed to making quality arts education an essential part of every child's education in the New York City public school system. CAE pursues this mission through two primary means: the building of capacities in teaching and learning in the arts; and public engagement and advocacy. Since its founding in 1996, CAE has provided nearly \$40 million directly to schools to build and sustain high quality arts education programs. CAE is dedicated to influencing educational and fiscal policies that will support arts education in all of the New York City public schools and regularly engages the public with research and other resources that demonstrate the benefits of and need for arts education as part of a quality, well-balanced education.

CAE also hosts government briefing events on arts education for local and state public officials. Through its grant programs, including Parents As Arts Partners and the School Arts Support Initiative, as well professional development for educators, CAE identifies and supports exemplary partnerships and programs that demonstrate how the arts contribute to learning and student achievement. In 2007, CAE published its first Parent Guide on arts education which, by popular demand, has more than 200,000 copies in circulation. CAE's acclaimed Career Development Program, established in 1999, has introduced the City's \$21 billion creative industries to hundreds New York City public high school students through intensive career readiness training and internships with top businesses.

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