



THE CENTER FOR ARTS EDUCATION

For Immediate Release

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Arts Organization Calls for Preservation of Arts Spaces in Overcrowded Public Schools

The Center for Arts Education Cites Recent Survey of Principals as Serious Concern

New York, NY – October 3, 2008 – At a rally on the steps of City Hall this morning, The Center for Arts Education sounded a call for the preservation of disappearing arts spaces in New York City’s public schools. “Easing overcrowding and providing adequate classroom space for public school students should be a top priority for New York City,” said Doug Israel, Director of Research and Policy for The Center for Arts Education (CAE), “however, this should not be done by seizing and converting dedicated facilities necessary to support learning in the arts. Unfortunately, music rooms, dance spaces, black box theaters and art studios have been divided, walled, and turned into academic classrooms or commandeered for other purposes.”

The rally on the steps of City Hall coincides with a City Council hearing held by the Committee on Education and Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses, to discuss overcrowding in public schools, where CAE also provided testimony on the state of arts education in public schools and the loss of arts spaces to general classroom use.

“The New York City Department of Education (DOE) and the School Construction Authority (SCA) are developing the next five-year plan for new school construction. The Center for Arts Education believes it is critical that due attention be paid to the maintenance, expansion and reclamation of spaces dedicated to arts learning in public schools,” said Israel. “These dedicated spaces for arts learning are invaluable to teaching and learning and need to be valued as such.”

A recent survey conducted by Class Size Matters, in conjunction with the New York City Council, revealed that 25% of principals reported losing their art, music, dance, drama, or foreign language spaces to general education classrooms during their tenure. According to the DOE’s 2006-2007 “Annual Arts in Schools Report” the lack of available in-school arts space was one of the top three challenges to implementing arts education reported by all schools.

(More)

“In New York, the cultural capital of the world -- renowned for its Broadway theaters, world class museums, and thriving music and art scene -- city public schools are failing to provide the infrastructure, and even instructional time, to provide students with a world class education in and through the arts,” said Richard Kessler, CAE executive director.

CAE is calling on the Department of Education and the School Construction Authority to:

- Ensure that arts spaces are incorporated into the design and construction of all new school facilities;
- Create a citywide plan to inventory and then reclaim lost arts spaces in public schools;
- Ensure that the formula used to determine capacity at the school level reflects the loss of arts and other cluster spaces and the need to reclaim and improve access of students to these and other common areas, such as auditoriums and gymnasiums.

According to the U.S. Department of Education “The spaces and facilities available in schools to teach the arts are important indicators of the level of commitment to arts education.” This was shared in their report on the findings of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) that was released after the administration of tests in music, theater and visual arts in 1997. The report found that visual arts and music students scored higher on either “creating” and/or “performing” on the NAEP test when they were taught in appropriately equipped facilities.

About The Center for Arts Education

The Center for Arts Education (CAE) is committed to restoring, stimulating, and sustaining quality arts education as an essential part of every child’s education. CAE provides information and resources that demonstrate the benefits of and need for arts education as part of a quality, balanced education. CAE is dedicated to influencing educational and fiscal policies that will support arts education in all of the City’s public schools.

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