



THE CENTER FOR ARTS EDUCATION

For Immediate Release

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**STATEMENT BY RICHARD KESSLER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE CENTER FOR ARTS EDUCATION
ON THE RELEASE OF THE THIRD *ANNUAL ARTS IN SCHOOLS REPORT 2008-2009*
December 11, 2009**

The Center for Arts Education applauds the Office of the Arts and Special Projects (OASP) of the New York City Department of Education (DOE) on the release of the third *Annual Arts in Schools Report* (report). While there are some encouraging signs from the data provided, the report points to an alarming disinvestment in key elements of quality arts instruction and highlights the continued widespread lack of compliance with state educational mandates for arts education at the elementary and middle school levels.

Through a preliminary analysis of the report data, we have recognized, and outlined below, several areas of concern.

School Arts Budgets

According to the report, there have been precipitous declines in spending on arts supplies and instruments, as well as services by the city's arts and cultural organizations that provide invaluable educational opportunities for city schoolchildren. This is disturbing, especially as the state and city's economic outlook predicts across-the-board budget cuts on the horizon for city schools. It is also important to note, these are declines in budgeting. Actual expenditures were presumably less because schools suffered mid-year budget cuts during the 2008-09 school year.

- At the **elementary school** level, schools budgeted \$2.5 million (73 percent) less for arts supplies, materials, instruments, etc. than 2006-07 (the first year the report was issued); budgeting to hire the services of arts and cultural organizations has declined \$3.7 million (33 percent).
- At the **middle school** level, schools budgeted \$2.7 million (80 percent) less for arts supplies, materials, instruments, etc. than in 2006-07; budgeting to hire the services of arts and cultural organizations has declined \$2.9 million (53 percent).
- At the **high school** level, schools budgeted \$1.8 million (50 percent) less for arts supplies, materials, instruments, etc. than in 2006-07; budgeting for the services of arts and cultural organizations has declined \$1.1 million (35 percent).

While the report does point to a slight increase in average per capita spending on the arts from \$306 per student in 2006-07 to \$311 in 2007-08 and to \$316 in 2008-09, we are concerned this

increase is attributable solely to budgeting for personnel, meaning mandatory salary increases, raises and related growth in personnel costs for the arts teachers already in the system.

Moreover, it is important to note that this dollar figure is an average and does not recognize the disparities that are known to exist across schools and communities and the fact that some schools have no arts education whatsoever. To better determine where inequities in the delivery of arts education exist and how to rectify them, we call on the DOE to report on an individual school basis how much is being budgeted, and spent.

Instruction and Compliance with State Education Mandates

According to the report, **at the elementary level**, only 12 percent of schools comply with state law by providing students with instruction in all four art forms (music, dance, theater, and visual arts). While this marks an increase of four percentage points, at the current pace of improvement it would take ten more years for even half of the city's elementary schools to be in compliance. This is unacceptable.

The trend **at the middle school level** is cause for the greatest concern. According to the report, over the past four years the number of certified arts teachers on staff at middle schools has declined by almost 13 percent, with a 3 percent decline last year as compared to the previous school year. In addition, middle school budgeting on arts supplies and instruments and educational services from cultural organizations has declined dramatically, as noted above.

In addition, it is puzzling that with fewer certified arts teachers, the percentage of middle schools reporting that all of their students have met the state requirements has increased to 63 percent.

Finally, **at the high school level**, while it is encouraging that the DOE reports that the percentage of schools offering instruction in the four recognized art forms is increasing; this increase reflects only what is being offered, as opposed to what students are actually receiving. A comparison of the high school data provided in the last three *Annual Arts in Schools Reports* shows steep declines in the percentage of students that have taken three or more credits in the arts, from 46 percent in 2006-07 to 32 percent in 2007-08 to a low of 28 percent in 2008-09. There have also been significant declines in budgeting for arts supplies and instruments, as well as services from cultural organizations, as noted above.

While there has been an increase in the hiring of certified arts teachers at the high school level over the past several years, CAE continues to be concerned that close to 20 percent of high schools do not have any certified arts teacher on staff. As the state requires arts instruction at the high school level to be taught by certified arts teachers, we must ask how those students at schools without certified arts teachers on staff are meeting graduation requirements.

Summary

While the work of OASP to enhance arts education in the city's public schools is commendable, working within an educational construct that is so heavily tilted towards achieving progress on state tests in just two subject areas, the arts stand little chance of flourishing across the system. The looming budget cuts are cause for great concern.

The Center for Arts Education will be further analyzing the data in the weeks and months to come and look forward to a fruitful dialogue on how best to ensure that every child in every school is receiving the quality arts education to which they are entitled.

We call on the DOE to redouble its efforts to ensure that all schools are in compliance with the education mandates set forth in state law. We are encouraged that the OASP has stated that 100

percent compliance is their goal. As a first step to ensure educational equity across the school system, and to protect the arts from disproportionate budget cuts, the city should once again ensure that all schools receive dedicated per pupil funding for arts education.

About The Center for Arts Education

The Center for Arts Education (CAE) is committed to stimulating and sustaining quality arts education as an essential part of every child’s education in the New York City public schools. CAE provides tools and resources to deliver quality arts learning for all children. Our innovative teaching and learning programs – fostering collaboration with teachers and school leaders, cultural and community organizations – help build arts-infused school communities. Our advocacy initiatives educate policymakers and the public about the value of arts education and a fundamental part of children’s overall health and well-being. Visit www.caenyc.org to learn more about The Center for Arts Education.