



December 19, 2008

President-Elect Barack Obama
Office of Presidential Transition
Washington, DC 20510

Dear President-Elect Obama:

On behalf of the arts education community, congratulations on your recent election to the presidency of the United States.

At a time of great economic uncertainty in our country it is vitally important that our students receive the best education possible. A comprehensive education includes the arts. The arts bring creativity and meaning to our lives that help strengthens communities socially, educationally and economically.

In FY 2008, through the Arts in Education program at the U. S. Department of Education, our organizations received \$36 million in support which we used to improve programming and access to the arts in school and community settings. The result is improved academic performance and opportunity that meets local standards and needs.

The Arts in Education program funds model arts education programs in schools throughout the country; professional development for arts educators in all disciplines; and the ongoing national arts education initiatives of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and VSA arts.

Years of research demonstrate that a significant link exists between arts education and students' academic performance, as well as their social development, motivations, attitudes, and disposition toward learning. In particular, the programs of VSA arts, which assure the inclusion of students with disabilities in school-based and community programs, demonstrate the value of this engagement.

Programs supported through Arts in Education funding are showing impressive results. Students who take regular arts courses are shown to have better attendance at school, earn better grades, have lower drop-out rates, perform more community service, watch fewer hours of television, and have higher self-esteem. As you know, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) recognizes the arts as a core subject of learning. As the Congress considers the reauthorization of NCLB and states continue to work to implement NCLB, we must move beyond simply declaring the arts as a core academic subject to actually implementing arts education as an essential subject of learning.

Our states, schools, and communities are poised to further strengthen arts education, but they need your help. We urge you to support a comprehensive arts education for every student and the professional development of our teachers by funding the Arts in Education programs at the U.S. Department of Education.



We look forward to working with you and your administration on these and other important issues.

Sincerely,

American Association of Museums
Americans for the Arts
Association of Art Museum Directors
Association of Performing Arts Presenters
Dance/USA
League of American Orchestras
Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc./Lincoln Center Institute
MENC: The National Association for Music Education
OPERA America
Performing Arts Alliance
Theatre Communications Group
VSA arts