



August 28, 2009

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW.
Washington D. C. 20202

Docket ID: ED-2009-OESE-0006

Attention: Race To The Top Comments from the Performing Arts Alliance

Dear Secretary Duncan:

On behalf of the Performing Arts Alliance, a national network of more than 18,000 members comprising the professional, not-for-profit performing arts and presenting fields, we would like to express our appreciation for your recent support of the importance of arts education in an August 18 teleconference sponsored by NAMM and Supportmusic.com. Your affirmation that arts education can help meet national education goals to close the achievement gap and raise the bar on student and school performance is strong encouragement for arts organizations across the country to continue their community-based efforts to support a complete education for all students.

We do wish to register one point. While the performing arts community appreciates the opportunities for arts organizations to apply for Race to the Top grants, we are concerned that the guidelines will have the unintended consequence of further narrowing the definition of student success to the detriment of the arts. The guidelines for the Race to the Top funds emphasize STEM education and math and reading standardized tests. However, there is ample evidence that student achievement in school, work, and life requires skills and knowledge offered by all the core subjects, including the arts. Section I Proposed Priority 2 lists STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) as a "Competitive Preference Priority," which we believe will narrow the curriculum further at a time when the unique benefits of the arts are especially valuable. We urge you to authorize and encourage inclusion of arts learning in STEM initiatives in order to foster imagination and innovation. Without the arts, STEM falls short of its potential to advance education and workforce development.

In order to respond to the changing climate of global competitiveness, demographic shifts, and economic disparity, major changes to the delivery of education to our nation's children are inevitable. As our nation contemplates these changes, and prepares students to be global citizens, the federal commitment to arts education must be strengthened so that the arts are implemented as a part of the core curriculum of our schools and are integral to every child's

development. Moreover, the high-need students that Race to the Top funding aims to serve are at the most risk of losing out on a comprehensive education. A 2007 study from the Center on Education Policy has found that, since the enactment of NCLB, 30% of districts with at least one school identified as needing improvement have decreased instruction time for arts and music. These are the districts whose students are most responsive to the benefits of the arts, as demonstrated through numerous research studies.

We thank you for this opportunity to respond with comments and if further clarification is needed, please do not hesitate to contact the Performing Arts Alliance at (202) 207-3850 or tclardy@artspresenters.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea E. Snyder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrea Snyder, Chair
Performing Arts Alliance
President & Executive Director
Dance/USA