



April 13, 2010

Dear Member of Congress:

The National Dance Education Organization is proud to be a National Co-Sponsor of Arts Advocacy Day 2010. As the nation's advocates for dance educators and dance education centered in the arts, we urge members of the House and Senate to consider the benefits of high quality dance education in the United States. Our children need access to high quality educators and resources in order to reap the benefits of dance and to become active, engaged, creative contributors in the workforce.

ESEA Reauthorization:

President Obama has asked Congress to overhaul and reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). NDEO is excited by the possibility reauthorization presents to strengthen arts education access and quality in our nation's schools. We urge Congress to consider the following recommendations in reauthorization of ESEA:

- Retain the arts in the definition of core academic subjects. An education in the arts prepares students with the creative skills needed in all aspects of education, work and life. Students are best served by a comprehensive and well-rounded curriculum that includes the arts.
- Define "the arts" as "dance, music, theatre, and visual arts." Without such inclusion, states often feel they have fulfilled "arts" education requirements by offering only music and visual arts, completely ignoring dance and theatre and the benefits of each.
- Retain the "highly qualified" teacher status for K-12 education. Dance in the arts must be taught by dance/art specialists trained in the artistic processes of creating, performing, and critical analysis, who have the ability to teach arts integration.

Arts in Education:

We recognize the importance of professional development and the role model programs play in education. NDEO has developed Professional Teaching Standards to insure that children have the best instruction possible, and that teacher candidates have sufficient content and pedagogical knowledge to address the needs of all children. NDEO has also developed criteria for model dance education programs that are designed to be taught by qualified educators in a graduated curriculum for all populations.

We urge Congress to fund Arts in Education programs not only through Model Development and Dissemination projects and Professional Development programs, but also through funding research in arts education. Timely and comprehensive data collection, research, and assessments in the arts (dance, music, theatre and visual arts) must be provided to arts educators if they are to meet the needs of our nation's children.

National Service:

We fully support the proposed creation of an Artists Corps within the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The Artists Corps will work with nonprofit community organizations to place artists in communities to provide needed education, performances and outreach. The arts and arts organizations have a proven record of building community across boundaries and providing education and help to populations in need.

Students who study dance test higher on the SATs (36 points on the verbal and 15 points higher on the math sections), and students of minority multicultural populations test as kinesthetic learners, but only 20% of U.S. schools have dance programs, and only 7% of those students are taught by a qualified dance educator. An education in the arts provides Americans with the 21st century skills needed to innovate, solve problems, and compete in the global economy. Every American deserves the opportunity to create, perform, and learn through dance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jane Bonbright". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Jane Bonbright, Ed.D.
Executive Director