



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ARTS COMMITTEE REPORT TO THE PANEL ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY**

Tuesday, September 23, 2014

Prospect Heights Campus Brooklyn, New York



Good evening. It is a privilege, once again, to come before the PEP as chair of the Arts Education Committee of the DOE. Since there are new members of the PEP with us tonight, perhaps it would be helpful to remind everyone that the committee was established as a recommendation of the State Legislature when Mayor Bloomberg was given control of the city's schools. It was not a mandate, but the Mayor did authorize the group whose members were selected by then Chancellor Joel Klein. Along with this action the administration also published an "Annual Arts in Schools Report", each year from that point forward, remarkable for its candor but, regrettably, demonstrating that over the years support for the arts declined.

During these same years, documented fully in the printed reports previously sent to the PEP, the committee called for reaching four major goals to be achieved by 2014. In its "A Blueprint for Arts Education 2011-2014", the committee detailed how the arts "prepare students for school, work, and life"; how they "help close the achievement gap"; and how, in a staged, systematic manner the schools could meet the statewide instructional requirements for the arts, offering all four art forms, step by step, at the elementary and secondary levels. This progress was to have been assessed fully using methodology developed in the "Arts Achieve Project", funded by the US Department of Education and with the commitment of the Office of the Arts and Special Projects.

In the waning years of the Bloomberg administration our recommendations began to be considered by the committee as an advisory group to the new Mayor and Schools Chancellor.

The report we are now presenting conforms to these principles and, fortunately, to the priorities of Mayor De Blasio and Chancellor Farina, including:

- targeting middle schools, raising many of them up from neglecting the arts
- providing services by certified arts teachers
- integrating the arts into the training of pre-K teachers
- expanding the Office of the Arts and integrating it with the other instructional offices, and
- finding a way to provide arts services after school, as an extension of the school day.

The Chancellor has already alluded to sharing best practices among all teachers, expanding professional development for teachers and school leaders, and to shared responsibilities for the delivery of instruction by teachers and cultural providers.

So, the arts education committee welcomes the visionary words of Mayor Bill DeBlasio and his support of the agenda posited by Chancellor Carmen Farina, whose extraordinary successes as teacher, principal, school superintendent, and Deputy Chancellor are legendary.

Announcing his first step toward strengthening middle schools by infusing the least served with arts programs led by certified teachers as a "down payment" toward enriching these schools is a major step this committee has proposed for several years. We are grateful for this recognition of the needs of these students. We anticipate that these funds will grow over his terms in office, and that the Mayor will turn his attention, next, to other levels of education. Primary among these are pre-K where the intellectual capacities of children are enhanced by experiences in the arts, and the high school level at which the potential for success of its graduates must be raised. Not only are there jobs in field related to the arts, but employers in every other business look for the creativity in employees made possible by the arts in their education. It is an established fact that the arts prepare many for the work force just as they pave the way for that "pursuit of happiness" throughout their lives envisioned by the founding fathers. Nothing less should be expected of graduates of the school system in the cultural capital of the world.

So it is a distinct pleasure, this year, to be presenting our case in an atmosphere that is both positive and understanding with respect to the role of the arts in the lives of our children, their future, and the future of the City.

For, along with the specific recommendations we are making to the PEP, it is important to remember that, in the City of New York, the arts are a driving force behind its economic engine. That people from across the globe come to this City to experience the richness of its cultural institutions makes it even more ironic that funding to support our own children to engage in the same experiences has been so often overlooked or deemed not as worthy as other parts of the pre-K-12 curriculums. Therefore we continue to insist that the Department of Education maintain the increase of support for certified arts teachers across all school levels, thus realizing the full potential of the arts --- indeed, sustaining it for the foreseeable future; this, to attain the full vision of the Chancellor and the Mayor. Our collective goal must be to reach the point at which every child in every school is affected both emotionally and cognitively by the arts.

So the Arts Education Committee is making the following recommendations to further the education of our children.

1. Now that there are openings for arts teachers at the middle school level, and the number of certified teachers is not sufficient to meet these needs, we propose a more vigorous recruitment effort (especially in the areas of theatre, dance, and vocal music) and request that the DOE consider establishing a program of arts teaching fellows, similar to those in math, science, history, literacy, that already exist. Studies done at institutions preparing talented professionals to become teachers through alternate certification means demonstrate the overwhelming success of those who have completed such courses of study.
2. Another way to recruit teachers would be through the formation of a committee to explore how reciprocity across city and State lines for those who hold certification as arts teachers can be facilitated
3. In light of the rebirth of many arts programs a commitment must be made, now, and enforced, to stop the dismantling of arts facilities in the schools to make room for regular classrooms --- a practice over this past decade that has destroyed state of the art rooms with expensive equipment vital to the creation of the arts. More money must be put aside to re-create some of these spaces where the demand is high. (Parenthetically, it should be noted that sharing of arts spaces in large school buildings that now house several smaller schools has not worked; scheduling these rooms is an administrative nightmare.)
4. The appeal to the general public to resurrect old instruments from attics and basements, while yielding a sizable supply donated to the schools, has also made it more imperative that budgetary funds be set aside to repair these and other existing instruments so that they are able to be played. A plentiful number of art media and of the supplies necessary for drama and dance is a concomitant need.
5. For these reasons school budgets will need to be increased so as not to impose a set of irreconcilable choices on principals, already facing budget cuts. There is no lack of interest on the part of the vast majority of principals to establish rich arts programs in their schools. The fault lies with past school leaders who, until the advent of this new Mayor and Chancellor, had been caught up in the headlong race between education and catastrophe across the nation, focusing narrowly on the means to a fine education through tests alone, thereby neglecting that part of the curriculum designed to produce world class creative leaders ---- the arts. We owe our children nothing less than the best of all disciplines and, as both Mr. De Blasio and Ms. Farina have already demonstrated; creative thinking can begin to make it happen.
6. We urge the strengthening of after school programs with models that are rich in arts experiences so that even more children can be exposed to the arts, and that these models be staffed by both certified arts teachers and cultural arts partners, jointly
7. We welcome the new commitment to present the arts through the arts cultural community, especially addressing children with special needs, and engaging families. There can be no effective arts education program without the active engagement of the entire spectrum of arts groups and organizations. The model

exists as there has been a well-conceived history of such cooperation between educators and artists for the past 40 years.

Finally, we are grateful to the Mayor for committing his administration to support for the arts over the next four years. We politely remind everyone, however, that a "down payment" is almost always accompanied by a long term mortgage that presupposes a commitment expected to last for at least 15-30 years.

On behalf of the committee I thank you for your time and attention.

Committee Members

Jody Arnhold, The Arnhold Foundation/Founder of the Dance Education Laboratory (DEL) at the 92nd Street Y

David Montgomery, Assistant Professor of Educational Theatre- New York University/NYCDOE parent

Valerie Louzonis, Visual Arts Teacher, Mark Twain IS 239K

Jerrold Ross, *Chair*- Former Dean of The School of Education and Academic Vice President, St. John's University

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Ex Officio

Paul King, Executive Director, Office of Arts and Special Project/NYCDOE

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