

October 12, 2012

Dear Chairman Parsons and Members of the Governor's Education Reform Commission:

We would like to offer testimony to the Commission as Chairs of the New York City Arts in Education Roundtable. The Roundtable is the service organization for cultural organizations and individual practitioners who provide education programs and services to New York City's schools and communities. Founded in 1992, the organization currently has 163 organizational and individual members; member organizations range in size from major cultural institutions like Carnegie Hall or Lincoln Center Theater to small community-based groups such as Music Wizards, Inc. in Brooklyn or Phyllis Rose Dance Vectors in Queens.

The Roundtable provides professional development to our members and to the field in general in a variety of formats: our annual two-day *Face to Face* conference for roughly 500 attendees, monthly seminars, panels, and workshops, and our newly redesigned web site, [www.nycaieroundtable.org](http://www.nycaieroundtable.org), serves as an interactive forum and online resource center. Through these various formats we share best practices and important research, opinions, and ideas and provide up-to-the minute information about trends and policies relevant to our constituencies.

All these activities help us further our mission, which is to improve, advance, and advocate for arts education. Our aim is to help our members and all practitioners provide arts instruction and programs of the highest quality possible. We do so because the Roundtable and its members deeply understand the crucial importance of the arts as a component of student learning and growth in grades pre-K—12 and beyond. A growing body of research provides compelling evidence that the skills, knowledge, and understanding students gain from education in and through the arts develop their capacities to collaborate, to innovate, to empathize, to analyze, and to imagine. These capacities will in turn help them realize their full human potential and become engaged, productive members of society.

The Roundtable's member organizations — the cultural community of New York City — believe so deeply in the value of arts education that we have invested substantially in the programs and services we provide, making them available to schools below cost. The Roundtable periodically surveys the city's arts service providers about this investment, asking them how much their programs cost and how much they charge the schools. The results indicate that over the past decade, cultural organizations have annually provided the schools with programs whose aggregate dollar value is in the tens of millions (over \$125 million in 2004-05, somewhat over \$85 million in 2009-10, reflecting the effects of the economic downturn). Consistently, the key finding has been that schools pay only a fraction of these programs' costs; the cultural groups subsidize their charges to the schools by between two or three to one. In other words, school principals typically pay between a third and a half of program costs with service providers making up the difference through fundraising or by tapping into other earned income streams (e.g., box office receipts).

In the final analysis, the surveys show that the cultural community is a tremendously important educational resource in dollar terms alone. The professional development that the Roundtable provides — along with in-house training and development at the respective organizations — help ensure that the services we collectively provide add significant value to pre-k—12 students in educational terms as well. We should add that our peer organizations throughout New York State have similar stories to tell.

However, despite our best efforts and those of our colleagues in the NYC DOE's Office of Arts and Special Projects, serious inequities of access to arts instruction persist throughout the New York City School system, particularly affecting high-needs students who arguably need these programs, services, and courses the most. These inequities exist throughout the State; hundreds of schools in New York City and elsewhere are not in compliance with the minimum State requirements for arts instruction. The arts are not the only subject area that suffers from such inequities; non-compliance with mandated subjects seems prevalent throughout the State. As a result, significant numbers of students are not receiving the even the adequate basic education to which they are legally entitled. The consequences of this deprivation are reflected in increasingly frequent reports about the inability of high school graduates to succeed in college or the workplace.

To address these issues, the Roundtable offers the following recommendations to the Commission:

1) Establish a statewide survey and monitoring system through the State Department of Education to determine which schools are in compliance in all mandated subject areas, including the arts.

2) Provide technical assistance to enable schools to come into compliance in those subject areas where they are not.

3) Offer incentives for compliance, for example, citations for demonstrated excellence in any subject, including the arts.

Thank you for reading our testimony and considering our recommendations.

Sincerely yours,



Kati Koerner  
Co-Chair



Ted Wiprud  
Co-Chair