



**For Immediate Release
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Creativity at Crossroads of California's Investment in Education

-- Experts Predict State Budget Cuts Would Squander Progress to Provide Quality Arts Education and 21st Century Skills for 6 Million Students --

May 7, 2008 - California's historic commitment to restoring arts education to all children hangs in the balance as education experts anticipate the Governor's budget proposal release on May 21st. Today, education stakeholders and arts education advocates joined forces to brief media on efforts to protect quality education via arts learning. They emphasized that research demonstrates that the performing and visual arts support student success, fostering critical thinking skills, enhancing both academic rigor and student retention. State PTA and corporate representatives shared their concern for the state's future economic and community viability if proposed cuts to education as high as \$4.5 billion are enacted.

"The historic investment in arts education that the Governor and Legislature made in 2006 set a new standard for ensuring the quality, equity and access that every child deserves in the state of California," said Laurie Schell, the Executive Director for the California Alliance for Arts Education (CAAE). She discussed the goals state residents have for education, according to the recent Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) survey a strong majority (60%) of Californians, choose K-12 public education as the area they would like to protect from budget cuts. Despite this, experts predicted that innovative and creative educational programs may face serious funding losses.

"California's parents believe that every student in California, regardless of where they live, and their community's ability to raise extra funds to support the arts at their schools, has the right to a well-rounded, quality education that includes experience with the arts," said Carol Kocivar, of the California State PTA and its one million PTA members. She emphasized the importance California parents place on the arts adding, "It's how children learn, regardless of their financial status, their native language, how they learn or the special education support they need. The arts help children succeed in school and succeed in life."

Mark Slavkin, the Vice President for the Music Center in Los Angeles County told reporters "The block grants have been an enormous catalyst and a great spark to reignite arts education across

Los Angeles County and throughout the State. Rescinding money now would be penny wise and pound foolish. It will pull the rug out from under the 80+ districts in Los Angeles County that are initiating arts education programs, hired and trained teachers, developed curriculum and long term plans to assure every student access to quality arts education."

"In a state where there are numerous arts- and creative-centered industries from Hollywood to Silicon Valley which require a skilled, creative and innovative workforce, reduced arts education funding will have a significant impact on California's economy," said Nancy Carr, the sole Visual and Performing Arts Consultant for the California Department of Education (CDE). Ms. Carr described entertainment mogul George Lucas's request for "more well trained (arts) students, enabling him to hire local talent and reducing his need to employ fewer staff to process visas." She added, "I was astounded at the number of arts related jobs that are available at any given movie studio. During a recent tour of one studio, there were more than 200 full-time employees whose sole purpose was to create scenery every day."

Reinforcing the need to develop students into workers with 21st century competitive skills, Sarah Murr of The Boeing Company informed that "The business community is increasingly calling for more creative skills from the emerging workforce." She also reinforced the widespread benefits of quality arts learning. "Boeing invests in the arts to promote healthy and vibrant communities. Creative students become creative citizens, and we need them," she stated. Mr. Slavkin agreed, "Business leaders are telling us that they need kids who bring innovation, creativity and problem solving skills and we know that quality arts programs provide that."

Despite the fact that arts learning is proven to provide a well-rounded education that benefits the whole child, Ms. Kocivar predicted that "without the benefit of the arts, our schools will continue to struggle to provide youngsters with the ability to be good citizens, good taxpayers and our imaginative leaders of tomorrow."

Ms. Schell concluded, "The California Alliance for Arts Education supports on-going funding for the Arts and Music Block Grant to ensure quality, equity and access."

To hear the audio version, read the transcript of today's Audio News Conference, or get a detailed power point presentation, you can visit <http://www.keepartsinschools.org> or contact Dana Nachbar at 914-833-7093.

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The California Alliance for Arts Education (CAAE) works to promote, support and advocate visual and performing arts education for preschool through post-secondary students in California schools. More info at www.artsed411.org

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