

TOOL

Arts Education and Student Achievement: QUOTES FROM INFLUENTIAL LEADERS

Thanks to the efforts of advocates, arts education is identified as a core academic subject in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB)¹, building upon the previous commitment made in the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 that the arts are “forms of understanding and ways of knowing that are fundamentally important to education.”² Arts education advocates have made significant strides in raising awareness on both sides of the political spectrum, as well.

President Barack Obama has called for a “complete and competitive education”³ for American students, and the current administration values arts education as a tool to build the skills necessary for success in the 21st century.

President Barack Obama: “The arts are not somehow apart from our national life, the arts are at the heart of our national life... So let’s never forget that art strengthens America. And that’s why we’re making sure that America strengthens its arts. It’s why we’re reenergizing the National Endowment for the Arts. That’s why we’re helping to sustain jobs in arts communities across the country. It’s why we’re supporting arts education in our school...”⁴

First Lady Michelle Obama: “You see this in your students as they become more confident and more engaged and more willing to take risks and to take responsibility for their futures. You see it when their academic performance improves, when you see improving attitudes and higher GPAs. And you see young people who never saw themselves as college material, you see them getting those acceptance letters and you see them going on to pursue their degrees. So we all know...the power of the arts to change young people’s lives.”⁵

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan: “Arts education can help build the case for the importance of a well-rounded, content-rich curriculum in at least three ways: First, the arts significantly boost student achievement, reduce discipline problems, and increase the odds that students will go on to graduate from college. Second, arts education is essential to stimulating the creativity and innovation that will prove critical to young Americans competing in a global economy. And last, but not least, the arts are valuable for their own sake, and they empower students to create and appreciate aesthetic works.”⁶

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan: “I can speak from personal experience about innovation, as a father of two young children who attend an amazing public school in Virginia. Their school has a science focus, but all of the teachers embrace the mission. The music teacher is an absolute rock star. Students sing, clap,

and dance about solids, liquids and gases. They learned the solar system through song. It’s just one example of how having clear standards for students drives innovation in a school.”⁷

Former Governor of Arkansas Mike Huckabee: “The arts open up a whole new horizon for every human being and without that, we will have very one-dimensional children who become one-dimensional adults... The arts are essential. We cannot do without them. They are an integral part of a good, overall academic preparation for life.”⁸

Former Secretary of Education Richard Riley: “The American economy is shifting from a manufacturing-driven engine to a services-driven enterprise. If young Americans are to succeed and to contribute to what [former] Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan describes as our “economy of ideas,” they will need an education that develops imaginative, flexible and tough-minded thinking. The arts powerfully nurture the ability to think in this manner... young people can be better prepared for the 21st century through quality learning experiences in and through the arts.”⁹

Former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan: “Critical awareness and the abilities to hypothesize, to interpret, and to communicate are essential elements of successful innovation in a conceptual-based economy. As with many skills, such learning is most effective when it is begun at an early age. And most educators believe that exposure to a wide range of subjects—including literature, music, art and languages—plays a considerable role in fostering the development of these skills.”¹⁰

¹<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf>

²<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-103hr6enr/pdf/BILLS-103hr6enr.pdf>

³<http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/>

⁴President Obama, Remarks at the Kennedy Center Honors Reception, December 6, 2009. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-reception-kennedy-center-honorees>

⁵First Lady Michelle Obama, Remarks at PCAH COMING UP TALLER AWARDS, November 2, 2009. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-first-lady-todays-arts-and-education-events-coming-taller-awards-classical->

⁶Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education, April 9, 2010. <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/wellrounded-curriculum>

⁷Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education, October 27, 2010. <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/link-between-standards-and-innovation-secretary-arne-duncans-remarks-innovate-educate->

⁸Huckabee, Mike. *Putting the Arts Front and Center on the Education Agenda*, Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, July 15, 2004. <http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/projectsPartners/chair2005/Huckabee.asp>

⁹Riley, Richard. *Preface to Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*. Arts Education Partnership and President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities: Washington, DC, 1999. http://aep-arts.org/publications/info.htm?publication_id=8

¹⁰Greenspan, Alan. *Structural Change in the New Economy*, Remarks before the National Governors’ Association, July 11, 2000. <http://www.federalreserve.gov/boarddocs/speeches/2000/20000711.htm>