

What do you mean when you say, "We support arts education?"

To some people this means what you and I think it means: **sequential programs taught in schools by qualified teachers based on the acquisition of skills and knowledge to high standards.** After all when you look up the definition of education it says skills and knowledge. But to some other folks, who wish to benefit from our communities' hard work, a subtle redefining of arts education has begun to appear. First we see the four distinct arts disciplines being grouped by Visual and Performing Arts, losing their unique Individuality in the process. Now this by itself would not be all bad if there was recognition how arts education should be defined.

But we found over the past year that many organizations have attempted to define enrichment programs, entertainment, promotional or exposure programs as arts education. A trip to the museum is equal to learning to draw or paint. Taking students to see an orchestra concert is equal in benefit to teaching the child to make his or her own music. Well, if this were the case wouldn't our most artistically developed humans then be the security guards at the museums and the ushers in our concert halls?

The problem....the danger....the threat....is very real! And here is why. We are all aware that many definitions of arts education compete with each other in the policy arena. Several years ago, a simple formulation was developed to clear matters both nationally and locally. Distinctions were drawn among entertainment, exposure, enrichment, and education. Entertainment involves casual engagement with any art form already known. Exposure involves engagement structured to produce a new experience with art. Enrichment involves engagement or experience crafted to support another educational activity. Education means engagement with an arts discipline as a body of knowledge and skills to be sequentially acquired and applied by a student.

However, when exposure, enrichment, or entertainment are presented as substantially equivalent to arts education (what you do), the cause of knowledge and skill development in students suffers. In addition, the arts disciplines lose their claim to parity as fundamental studies at the center of general education. We do not attempt to teach reading by taking students on tours of libraries. The benefits of MAKING music cannot be achieved by OBSERVING music. Students DO math. They do not observe math! School based programs cannot be replaced by out of school exposures. When they do children lose access to the valuable benefits a quality arts education provides. All of the science and all of the data and all of the information we have shared today points to the positive benefits when kids learn to make music. There is no proof or data the other way.

Think I am making this up? Let's look at the recent U.S. Senate debate over funding for the National Endowment for the Arts. Here are some quotes:

Senator Jim Jeffords (R-VT) - Quotes SAT's and research and says this is because of the NEA. "Roughly one percent of our schools are good; one percent are doing the job; one percent of our students are getting the kind of education that they need. Ninety-nine percent need to learn from somebody, somewhere, or somehow how they can improve their results."

Senator William Bennett (R-UT) said the following: "If the NEA funding goes away, the Utah Opera will not disappear. The Utah Shakespearean Festival will not disappear. The Utah Symphony will not disappear. Ballet West will not disappear. These are the leading arts organizations in Utah. But, he says, the school music programs will be hurt. The school musical activities that go on throughout rural Utah will be hurt if the NEA disappears. I think that is something to be concerned about."

Now, I know that the research we discussed or the improvement in SAT performance had nothing to do with the NEA. How many of you would no longer be able to teach if the NEA went away? You see when we allow confusion to reign, stupid things happen. When we allow the public to think that all programs are equal we have put the entire enterprise at risk.

Working with our close friends at MENC, NAEA, AATE, NDA (the four national arts education associations) we met with cultural advocates for the NEA to protest their use of arts education and asked them to fairly represent their educational role. They declined. When we asked that the proper definition be used for arts education they insisted since there was confusion about what is arts education we should not have a definition. Let me repeat that. When we asked that the proper definition be used for arts education they insisted since there was confusion about what is arts education we should not have a definition. Sounds like Washington double talk to me!

And as we speak, the arts education programs in Philadelphia are under attack by cultural organizations who wish to substitute enrichment programs for the classroom programs. Why? It is a great way to raise money! And a bad way to allow education systems off the hook for their responsibility of providing the arts to all children in an educational and viable way. And the poor teachers in the city are just trying to get through the day!

When push came to shove, people who said they supported arts education were willing to sacrifice the PRINCIPLE of arts education for the POLITICAL and TACTICAL convenience to promote themselves, regardless of the consequences for children's learning. This is a shame.

A wise woman from Texas once said, 'You can take a pig, put her in high heels and a dress, put on make-up and lipstick and call her Monique but when you kiss her...SHE IS STILL A PIG!!!' And just because someone dresses a program up and calls it arts education it does not make it so!

A lot of folks say, "We need to have more artist-in-residence programs in our schools. That's how we should spend education dollars." How many musicians do we have in the room? Drummers? See what some folks fail to get is there are already 200,000 artists-in-residence in our schools, we just call them arts educators. There is no magic lobotomy that happens when a teacher crosses the school house door that takes away and gives back their artistic skills!

Do you see the problem? Do you understand the issue? Now we believe that this battle is far from over. I know we can count on your support as we fight this issue over the next 12 months. I hope we can count on your support. Are you with us?

You see, when we forfeit our responsibility and leave the fate of our programs and what we want for our children in the hands of others, nothing good ever happens. And I might add we get what we deserve.

It is the responsibility of every single one of us who care so passionately about music in education to be sure this myth that music and the other arts are unimportant to the development of our children has been destroyed once and for all, and that the battles waged over the past 10 years do not end in tragedy but in triumph. We now stand at the dawning of this new era of music as partners in education and educational reform. Together, we can set in motion the wheels of progress that will work to institutionalize music and the arts in our schools, a course that cannot be reversed and whose own momentum can carry us into the new century and beyond. This new course will affect our children, their children and their children's children. We all must carry this banner and commit ourselves not only for today but from this day forward, until "Every child in every school, in every community, in every city and across this great nation will have access to a balanced, comprehensive, sequential, high quality, well-rounded program in music and the other arts taught by qualified teachers."

This is our challenge. This is our responsibility. And we must meet this challenge. For our recent history has shown that if we do not meet this challenge it will not be met, and we will only have ourselves to blame.