

Reinforcing Music Education in *No Child Left Behind*

We urge Wisconsin Legislators to:

- Ensure that information on the quality of music programs is included in the state and local “report cards” designed to meet the legal requirements for educational accountability in the *No Child Left Behind Act*. This information does not need to be the result of specific tests.

Talking Points:

- The arts are designated as a “core academic subject,” but implementation of the NCLB has led to the erosion of education in music and the other arts in the schools. A report from the Center for Education Policy concludes that, since the enactment of NCLB, 22% of school districts have reduced instructional time for art and music.
- Music, which is the art that currently makes the strongest contributions to schools across America, contributes significantly to the outcomes most desired by the American public from our education system.
- Citizens of Wisconsin must be given the access to information on the status of music programs in their public schools – what courses are being offered, amount of music educators, student participation numbers and fulfillment of DPI recommendations in music. These results should be posted on the local and state report card along with the reporting in other academic areas.
- Why is a report on the status of music education important to the Wisconsin citizens?

*In a recent survey, the vast majority of principals interviewed – 96% - agree that participating in music education encourages and motivates students to stay in school. Further, 89% of principals feel that a high-quality music education program contributes to their school achieving higher graduation rates. The widespread opinion is backed up by objective data on graduation and attendance rates.

*In an analysis of U.S. Department of Education data, researchers found that students who report consistent high levels of involvement in instrumental music over the middle and high school years show “significantly higher levels of mathematics proficiency by grade 12.” This observation holds regardless of socio-economic status.

*Students who are involved in music classes outperform their peers by a total of about 100 points on the combined SAT verbal and math scores.

- The 2006 Report from the bipartisan New Commission on Skills of the American Workforce, said in its executive summary, “The best employers the world over will be looking for the most competent, most creative, and the most innovative people on the face of the earth and will be willing to pay them top dollar for their services.” The report includes the arts as an essential skill for the future workforce and observes, for example, “software engineers who are also musicians and artists will have an edge over those who are not.”

Background:

The *No Child Left Behind Act*, the 2001 update of the 1965 *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, will expire in September 2007. Congress has begun the process of reauthorizing this law, which recognizes the arts as a core academic subject but has not, in practical implementation, led to sufficient attention to music as part of the curriculum. This is despite the fact that a growing corpus of research supports the longstanding experience of teachers, administrators, students, and parents, that strong music programs lead to stronger and more successful students. Refinement of the law’s public accountability provisions is the best way to address this shortcoming in implementation of federal education policy. After all, parents have the right to know the extent to which their children are being provided the benefits of a full school experience – that is, one that includes music.