



**California Alliance for Arts Education
Audio News Conference
May 7, 2008
12:00 pm PST**

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by. Welcome to the California Alliance for Arts Education's Media briefing. Experts today will cover what is up to date for California's more than 6 million children as an educational opportunity is threatened by the state's budget crisis. During the presentation all participants will be in a listen only mode. Afterwards we will conduct a question and answer session. At that time, if you have a question, please press the 1 followed by the 4 on your telephone. As a reminder, this conference is being recorded.

Your speakers for today, May 7, 2008, are Laurie Schell, Executive Director of the California Alliance for Arts Education, Nancy Carr, Visual and Performing Arts Consultant for the California Department of Education, Carol Kocivar, Vice President for Communications with California State PTA, Mark Slavkin, Vice President for Education at The Music Center in Los Angeles County and we have Sarah Murr, Community Investor, Regional Arts and Culture for Boeing Company. I would now like to turn the conference over to Ms. Laurie Schell. Please go ahead.

Laurie Schell: Thank you so much. I would like to welcome everyone. Thank you for taking the time to join us to talk about arts education. And just a reminder, we will be following up this conference with a transcript of the proceedings and also to let you know, should you like to follow along with the comments that our panelists are making, you can log onto keepartsinschools.org and there's a PowerPoint presentation there for your use.

The California Alliance for Arts Education is a state-wide organization dedicated to promoting, supporting and advocating for arts education for all California students. The context of our conversation today is around the current budget cuts proposed for education. In a recent study, just released by the Public Policy Institute, which polled over 2000 Californians about what was important to them from an educational standpoint, we learned that Californians care deeply about quality public schools.

Among other findings, the survey suggests that education and schools rank as the second most important issue to Californians. A strong majority, 60%, choose K-12 public education as the area that they would most protect - most like to protect from budget cuts ahead of health and human services. And 90% of the residents and the participants, across all political and demographic groups, say that the arts are an important part of the school curriculum.

So just to set the context a bit for - what has happened over the last three decades in arts education? And when we talk about arts education, we are really talking about the four arts disciplines -- dance, music, theatre and visual arts. You will hear more about that later from our Visual and Performing Arts Consultant from the Department of Education.

Over the last three decades, the schools in California have struggled to maintain a presence - to have the arts be a quality and central part of their

offerings in their schools and in their districts. Quality, standards-based visual and performing arts instruction has become over the last 30 years more of a luxury than a necessity with only a very few wealthy districts in California who had access to private funding or parent groups who were willing to do what it takes to raise additional funding - only these schools had the benefit of a quality arts education.

And in an SRI study that was released last year, it found that only 11% of public schools are meeting state goals for arts instruction, 61% of schools don't have a full-time arts teacher and elementary students, we've learned, get far fewer arts classes than children in other states. There is some good news, though, and we want to highlight these things.

State policy dictates that the visual and performing arts are a required course of study. There are rigorous standards in the visual and performing arts that have been adopted by the state in 2001. The admissions requirements for the UC and CFU systems require that a full year of visual and performing arts be on the student's transcript in order to gain admission to their universities and we also have some new teacher licensure requirements for generalist teachers, which require a few additional courses in the visual and performing arts for elementary teachers.

And what we will talk a lot about today is the Arts and Music Block Grant, which was passed by the governor and the legislature in 2006/7 and 2007/8. This (block) grant, which was historic in both its scope and its reach, in 2006/7, \$105 million was allocated on a per-pupil basis to every school in California and in 2007/8, \$109 million was allocated to schools.

The purpose of the funding was to hire teachers and administrators in the visual and performing arts to provide professional development and for

purchasing instructional materials. Also, in 2006, \$500 million was allocated in a one-time funding to be shared with physical education for the purchase of supplies and equipment. As a result, over the last two years, the schools in California have begun to rebuild their arts infrastructure and to reposition the arts as a part of the core curriculum and an essential part of the school day.

Because of the current proposed funding cuts to education of \$4.5 billion, these arts - fledgling in many cases - arts programs are threatened and not just these arts programs; our whole education system is threatened with this size cut. The California Alliance for Arts Education supports the efforts to ensure that every student in California receive a comprehensive education, which includes access to the benefits of arts education.

We do believe that it's appropriate for the arts to shoulder some of the burden during this economic crisis but we're concerned that the recommendations to consolidate categorical funding may unintentionally target arts education resulting in the diminished access to quality arts learning opportunities. We know that when school districts have to make difficult choices, very often the arts are left on the cutting room floor.

We believe the categorical investment of funds needs to continue in this year's budget and not be consolidated into a larger block grant and as the governor was quoted in an article a couple of weeks ago, "School districts should be given more flexibility in how they spend their funding but not at the expense of money that is earmarked for vital programs like music, the arts and physical education."

And to underscore, we do support the ongoing funding for the Arts and Music Block Grant to ensure quality, equity and access. And now I would like to turn

the call over to my colleague Nancy Carr, Visual and Performing Arts Consultant, the California Department of Education.

Nancy Carr: Good afternoon. The visual and performing arts is a definite, definitive curriculum in dance, music, theatre and/or visual arts education in California and it's a course of study for which our students in Grades 1-12 receive instruction and have a course of study that's aimed at developing aesthetic appreciation and all those skills of creative expression as defined by California education code.

Simply put, this means that students receive instruction in an arts discipline that addresses artistic perception, creative expression, aesthetic valuing, historical and cultural context as well as those connections, relationships and applications - the whole arts education in any of the disciplines.

Under each of those subheadings or strands are a series of sequential standards that inform the instruction and inform student learning. Equal access to such instruction, actually instructed by highly qualified teachers, has been the thrust of focus of the California Alliance for Arts Education.

The California Department of Ed provides content standards adopted by our state Board of Education in all four of those arts disciplines and these content standards provide common voice throughout the state of expected learnings for Pre-K through Grade 12 and gives students access to rigorous instruction and learning that's been supported in California by both the governor and the legislature through funding for arts education in both 2006/7 and 2007/8 fiscal years.

In hearing from our creative and innovative California economic (source), we really need to see that art learning continues and expands. When speaking

with individuals like (Milt Chan) of the George Lucas Foundation, he said to me that George would like nothing better than having more well-trained-in-the-arts students that he could hire so that he would have to hire fewer employees to process visas.

Last week in touring a film studio in Hollywood, I was absolutely stunned by the number of jobs available that I saw being driven around that studio's 65 acres - that are available to individuals that have an arts education background; it's absolutely mind boggling. And being driven through that studio, my mind was popping with the jobs available to our California arts education trained students and it's easy to see that link between arts education and work force needs.

That same one studio employs 100 individuals whose sole job is to design stage sets - just that alone. On any full day there's over 2300 employees there. The arts speak to creativity and innovation as does no other subject and research, now coming in droves, supports such a statement from me. In our right-brain learning that you hear so much about lately, that is where it occurs with arts education instruction, increasing our students' capacity for learning in all our subject areas and helps employ habits of mind that are lifelong skills necessary for a happy, successful life.

Those links of the learning play again to equity of access for our California students and all students, for that matter. In particular, development of the right-brain and its regulatory capacity is dependent upon experience and those experiences through the arts are key to that development, which coincidentally furthers social/emotional development, the ability to cope with stress, to recognize and question assumptions, empathy, working as part of a group towards product developer common goals and key workforce needs.

Arts education through its academic instruction provides solutions for student retention, engages our students in their learning and through different ways of learning as well as promoting a reduction in our dropout rate. The academics receive support through arts learning, especially in those pre-mentioned factors but additionally in cognitive learning developed through reading, math, science, writing, and other like curricular areas.

In my work here at the department, overseeing several grants for California schools, I've had a lens focused on outcome and I see districts really evaluating their current arts education program. I see districts developing 5- and 10-year plans to continue or build rigor into arts education learning for their students. I see them working to train their multiple subject elementary teachers to provide instruction within their class day, to have curriculum written for grades across the district that's sequential and standard-based so there's an equitable delivery of instruction across the district, and I see districts working to assess learning to provide program instructional improvement.

This is really a wonderful movement forward by districts. The lack of (free) service training and multiple subject teachers has been a key piece of the professional development provided by the funding of 2006/7 focusing on work that truly benefits our California students. What I'm seeing is our districts working to provide the quality, the equity and the access that the Alliance advocates for, that the Department of Ed advocates for, that our parents are seeking in our state. And seeing districts put strong actions behind words and ideas so that all our students have the opportunity for success in school and greater success in their adult life.

And now I'm pleased to have Carol Kocivar step to her phone. She's on the road with this busy budget time on her cell phone. So Carol Kocivar, Vice President for Communications with the California State PTA - take it away.

Carol Kocivar: Thanks Nancy. On behalf of the nearly 1 million members of the California State PTA, I just want to emphasize how important parents believe the arts are. The California State PTA has made bringing the arts back into our schools a high priority that includes a high priority for a guaranteed funding for the arts in our budget. We believe the arts are core to learning; it's how children learn.

And the arts help children succeed in school and succeed in life. One of the things that we're facing in our schools is the question of how do we close the achievement gap and one of the things that the arts does is address the needs of all children; children who may be English language learners, children who may be coming from poverty, children who may have special needs. And we believe all children - and that includes all children - deserve a high quality arts education.

Without the benefit of the arts, our schools will continue to struggle to provide youngsters who will be our good citizens, our good tax payers and our imaginative leaders of tomorrow - so the California State PTA really believes that every child should have the arts; every child at every school not depending on whether they can raise enough money from independent sources but every child in every school through guaranteed funding through our state budget.

And now I'd like to turn it over to Mark Slavkin who is the Vice President for Education of The Music Center in Los Angeles.

Mark Slavkin: Thank you Carol. Good afternoon everybody. Our organization, The Music Center, works with schools and school districts across Los Angeles County to help strengthen arts education. So we have kind of a ground level perspective at what's been happening in this field.

And as we talked about over the last 30 years since Prop 13, arts education has been largely hit and miss and what I mean by that is it's kind of the luck of the draw from the students' perspective as to whether they have access to quality arts learning. If you're in the right school district in the right school in the right classroom, you might have a robust program but if you're in the next school over or the next school district, you may have nothing.

And that kind of inequity is really unacceptable and we would never tolerate that if we were talking about reading or math, that we assume every kid in every school is being taught but in the arts it's been inequitable; it's been an uneven playing field that has really not been fair to our kids and not really been fair to our future as a great state.

This new money from the state that we've talked about, over \$100 million that's come in the Art and Music Block Grant, has made an enormous difference. It's been a gauge-changer in the language of the presidential campaign in that it's dramatically reframed the conversation at the school district level from a litany of why they can't provide arts education to a conversation about how they're going to provide arts education.

And that's a huge shift because now every school district in our county - and there are 80, 8-0, school districts in LA County serving 1.7 million K-12 public school kids. Every one of those districts is now getting an allocation from the State of California focused on arts education that's allowed school boards and superintendents and their leadership team to look at the uneven

reality of what they have today and look at it from an equitable point of view - how can we provide the arts for all of our students?

It led school districts to hire arts coordinators to manage this work, it's led them to provide new training for teachers, it's led them to acquire instruments and other equipment for music and other art programs. In short, it's been an enormous catalyst. It's been a great spark to reignite arts education across our county and get school districts moving forward in a proactive way. That's the good news.

The bad news is that school districts are cynical or leery about the sustainability of this funding. We as advocates of the arts have been providing assurance that this money is here to stay, that it is ongoing money; it's going to help them build their program over time and bring back the arts in a major way. Just two years into it, the prospect that this money could be cut or eliminated in some way is a horrible setback if that were to come to pass - on two levels.

Obviously the money is huge and without the money districts aren't going to make progress. But just as important is the loss of faith among educators who are just getting hopeful about rebuilding the arts in their schools, are just getting traction in moving the agenda forward. Those educators are going to be really left holding the bag; they will have felt that the rug was pulled out from under them and I think will be that much harder to excite the next time around if we're going to try to get the arts back.

We have to sustain this momentum. We have to build on the success of these last two years and maintain a degree of trust and faith with our educators on the front lines that we're going to stick with them as they rebuild the arts

program - that we're not going to allow this to be pulled out just as they're getting traction.

And then the last two points I would make is that the arts matter not just for building programs in schools; that's a means and not an end. The infrastructure for arts education has to be there - the teachers, the courses, the resources have to be there. But the bigger idea is empowering kids to lead this state and to lead this creative economy

As Nancy and others have said, we are foolish to fail to invest in kids who bring imagination, creativity, innovation to the table in whatever industry that they're going to pursue, whether it's in the arts and entertainment directly or any other part of our economy, business leaders are telling us that they need kids who come to the table with creativity, innovation and outstanding problem solving skills and we know the arts - quality arts programs help provide that.

And in a more kind of bottom line point of view, Americans for the Arts, which is an important national organization, has collected data that shows over 500,000 Californians are directly employed in the arts and helping to fuel our creative economy and it would be really penny-wise and pound-foolish to fail to invest in sustaining our creative economy. So with that, let me turn it over to one corporate leader from the Boeing Company who's been a huge investor in supporting arts and creativity and that's Sarah Murr, who's Community Investor, Regional Arts and Culture with the Boeing Company.

Sarah Murr:

Thank you Mark. The Boeing Company, as with any business, has a responsibility to invest in the communities where we live and have our business operations and our global corporate citizenship goal is to enable the development of vibrant communities.

And these communities have citizens who are educated, they're creative, they're civic-minded, environmentally conscious, healthy, and economically self sustained. And as Mark mentioned, one way we're investing in Southern California is through these arts initiatives that actually enable students to receive quality, standards-based arts education in the classroom.

And this is going to ensure that all students have access to an education that develops their whole being and this is a person who can communicate, visualize, collaborate and is creative. Arts education fosters creative students who therefore become creative citizens and it's proven that arts and culture activities have a unique ability to connect people from different cultures to build more cohesive, creative and connected communities.

Creative citizens will continue to work towards improving the communities where we all live. The business community as a whole seeks and needs creative employees. Our Integrated Defense System President and CEO Jim Albaugh, recently said, "Creativity is at the heart of everything we do at Boeing. It is what our engineers and scientists do to help us reach new heights in aviation and aerospace."

And from my experience working with other businesses, doing the similar job that I do in philanthropy, creative and innovative employees are the key to developing their next generation of products and this includes everything from the next animated movie to medical test equipment, agricultural equipment or even developing a new process to manufacture a product.

The ability to think creatively, communicate effectively and work together are increasingly identified as the key and necessary skills for future graduates along with reading, writing and arithmetic. And these are the graduates who

will be thinking about creating and designing the next generation, maybe spacecraft for us or the next innovation that we don't know we need yet, like an iPod. They will be working for businesses in California and supporting California's economy. Now we'll open the call up for questions.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, if you'd like to register a question, please press the 1 followed by the 4 on your telephone. You will hear a three tone prompt to acknowledge your request. If your question has been answered and you would like to withdraw your registration, please press the 1 followed by the 3.

We ask that if you're using a speakerphone to please lift your handset before entering your request. One moment please for the first question. Ladies and gentlemen, as a reminder, to register a question, please press the 1 followed by the 4 on your telephone keypad. Our first question comes from the line of Mitchell Lansford with Los Angeles Times. Please go ahead.

Mitchell Lansford: Yes. I'm just curious about what data - additional data you may have about the economic importance of the arts in California and whether or not employers are finding it difficult to find trained employees in arts-based fields.

Laurie Schell: This is Laurie Schell. I'll be glad to start with a response and then perhaps Nancy you have some other information you would like to (provide).

Nancy Carr: All right. All right.

Laurie Schell: We have anecdotal information. As Nancy was saying earlier, George Lucas' company and also from the folks at Pixar, which is, as you know - it's a digital animation company - that they do indeed have to look outside of California for many of their employees. That is anecdotal, I don't know if there has been

a study on how much that happens or to quantify that. We do know from earlier studies from California Arts Council and more recent studies from Americans for the Arts, what the - Americans for the Arts calls it a creativity indicator - how many jobs in California are related to arts-centric businesses.

So we can certainly make that information available to you. Several years ago the California Arts Council did a similar economic impact study and looked at the non-profit arts and their economic impact on California and we can certainly provide you that information as well.

Mitchell Lansford: Okay.

Nancy Carr: And let me just add a couple of pieces. One, in the conversations that I've had with Milt Chen at Skywalker Ranch, George Lucas Foundation, that is a constant comment made to me. "Nancy, would you just get more kids trained so we don't have to bring in people with visas?" At the same time, John Hughes of Rhythm and Hughes in Southern California has talked about having to outsource and set up and build structures to house employees in India because he can't find enough in the United States.

The number of students that are graduating from colleges that apply for jobs, because many of the industry people won't take people straight out of high school, is very minimal and so they're - I can give you anecdotal pieces from the different people that I enjoy talking with and are contacting me about that continually. But yes, there is that comment that we can't find enough trained students.

I know the fellow that's in charge of Industrial Light and Magic over at Skywalker Ranch continually comes over to UC Davis, which is by Sacramento here nearby and says he keeps looking for students that are being

prepared to work in that workforce and can't find any. So there's a growing concern about that and the outsourcing that's having to occur as a result of students not knowing how to sculpt and have a basic foundation in arts education much less the (career-tech) aspect.

Mitchell Lansford: And is the industry doing anything about this? I mean is there any lobbying going on with the governor now? Is there any effort to fund raise?

Nancy Carr: I can't speak to that at this point. I do know that it's becoming voiced more commonly across the board. Nothing happens quickly. Laurie, can you speak about the lobbying piece - the aspect? I'm not familiar enough with that day-to-day process because of my other responsibilities.

Laurie Schell: I'm not aware of anything at this time but we can certainly follow up and we'll see what we can find out.

Mitchell Lansford: All right. Thank you.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, as a reminder, to register a question, simply press the 1 followed by the 4 key on your telephone. Our next question comes from the line of Howard Bloom with the LA Times. Please go ahead, sir.

Howard Blume: Hi. Yes, I'm just wondering if there's a specific proposal to eliminate money for the arts program or (unintelligible) - at this point?

Laurie Schell: If I heard you correctly - this is Laurie Schell - you were asking if there is a - there was an echo on your line. You were asking if there is a proposal to eliminate the arts block grant funding?

Howard Blume: A specific proposal for to eliminate the - I guess the \$109 million - if that's actually on the table right now or what are the specifics of that? Or alternately a specific proposal to put that particular money into a combined unrestricted block grant?

Laurie Schell: The arts block grant funding did appear in the governor's January proposed budget. So it is still in the budget. What - we are seeing several proposals from both Republicans and Democrats and the Education Committee to, as I discussed earlier, to consolidate categorical funding and that would directly impact the Arts and Music Block Grant funds.

So there are several competing proposals on the table at this time to either roll all of the categoricals - or most of them - into six larger block grants or three block grants or somehow provide up to 50% flexibility in spending for any of the categorical funds. So districts could move money around within their school districts and not use the funds as they were designated. So there are actually several proposals on the table right now.

Howard Blume: Would you say...go ahead.

Nancy Carr: And Laurie - this is Nancy - I'm going to add one piece. That's the discussion of how to use the categoricals and that is a whole separate discussion from what to do about the state budget. So in those kind of times often an issue like reforming categorical programs get set aside until the budget issue is resolved so then the categorical issue could become an issue next year and not this year but it's anybody's guess.

Howard Blume: But if the governor's proposed budget became law as written, are you saying that the money previously designated for arts specifically would be rolled into a general block grant?

Laurie Schell: As written in the January budget, no. It would continue to be a separate designated line item. But we are seeing that budget being pushed and pulled in many different directions.

Howard Blume: And it's fully funded in the current budget or is subject to the 10% cut?

Laurie Schell: It would be subject to the cut.

Howard Blume: Okay. Thank you.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, as a reminder, to register a question, please press the 1 followed by the 4 on your telephone keypad. At this time there are no further questions. I would like to thank you all for participating.

Reporters who want to arrange interviews or receive additional material should contact Dana Nachbar of Douglas Gould & Company at 914-833-7093. Again, that's Dana Nachbar of Douglas Gould & Company at 914-833-7093. This now concludes the audio conference. Thank you.

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