



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

STUDENTS SAY 'BRING BACK THE ARTS!'

Students, Parents and School Officials Commit to Music Education as Part of Turnaround Strategy for their Middle School

Sacramento, CA, December 7, 2011: A few miles away from the state capitol where education funding hangs in the balance, parents packed a multi-purpose room to celebrate a hard won success at Rosa Parks Middle School. Students took the stage to talk about why the school's fledgling music education program is important to them, and then the school band played one of its first public performances for the parents, teachers, school administrators and elected officials gathered there.

"Practicing means you have to keep at it until you improve. That's what I learn from playing music," Mintoya Robinson, a Rosa Parks Middle school student shared.

Fellow bandmate Pashone Grandson agreed, "I learn from music about patience. When you mess up, you have to learn how to not get frustrated, and if you want to make it perfect, you just have to start over."

Last year, Rosa Park Middle School was named one of the Superintendent's Priority Schools, an SCUSD program designed to turn around its most chronically underachieving schools. Priority Schools receive additional resources and program flexibility. The first six schools in this program – Jedediah Smith, Father Keith B. Kenny and Oak Ridge elementary schools, Will C. Wood and Fern Bacon middle schools and Hiram Johnson High School – have all seen marked growth since the beginning of the program.

"When schools are in trouble, there's often a reaction to push things like arts and music to the side and focus on reading and math. Musical instruments end up in storage lockers gathering in dust," said Sacramento City Unified School District Superintendent Jonathan Raymond, "As educators, we know that the art classes are the very things that keep kids in school, keep them

interested and help them engage in deeper, more successful learning. We knew music had to be part of our turnaround strategy.”

A strong commitment from the community helped. Parent engagement has been a large part of the success at the Priority Schools and Rosa Parks parents were eager to bring back the arts.

This approach was applauded by school officials, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Iris Taylor, and Fine Arts Training Specialist, Gayle Carrick, who were in attendance, as well as Sacramento Mayor, Kevin Johnson. The mayor offered words of support for the students and school,

“I commend these students, this school and its community for making music a priority here. In Sacramento, The arts are valued. We recognize that they contribute to economic vitality, workforce development, civic pride and community spirit.”

The event at Rosa Parks was co-hosted by the California Alliance for Arts Education and is part of a statewide campaign to ‘Bring Back the Arts.’ According to Alliance Executive Director, Joe Landon,

“We're proud to be working with Sacramento Unified and Rosa Parks Middle School, who have demonstrated their commitment to make music accessible to their students. It's a message we want to spread throughout the state.”

Landon says students are essential to the effort:

“For too long the voices of students have been largely ignored. This campaign will be carried by student musicians, dancers, artists and actors, who can offer a powerful testament of how the arts impact their lives.”

For four decades, the California Alliance for Arts Education has led efforts to ensure that the visual and performing arts are a core part of every child’s education in California, by focusing on state policy, coalition building and public advocacy. To read about how arts education contributes to higher test scores and lower dropout rates, visit: www.artsed411.org.

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***Photos and video of the event are available**