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For Immediate Release
February 4, 2010

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AN OPEN LETTER TO CALIFORNIA SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS FROM THE CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE FOR ARTS EDUCATION

(PASADENA, CA) In the next six weeks, local school boards across California will be making tough decisions about their budgets. To meet the state's shortfall, K-12 education will take a \$892 million hit this year and another \$1.5 billion in 2010-11. Today, as local school districts size up their options, the California Alliance for Arts Education went on record with an open letter to California School Boards:

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This is a time of scarce resources. It's a time when answers must be found to difficult questions: "What is essential for our children to know and experience in order to become thriving, caring, successful, engaged citizens and workers of the 21st century?"

As school board members, you are expected to maintain the common goals we share, that each student deserves the benefits of a well-rounded education in order to prepare them for success in their lives.

The Visual and Performing Arts must remain where they belong, at the core of every child's educational experience. The arts do more than enhance the educational development of the child. Instruction in dance music, theatre, and visual arts prepare students with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the expectations of the

twenty-first century workforce. Those skills include the innovation, discipline, creativity and collaboration, as well as the practical applications inherent in career technical education courses.

The presence of a strong arts program is an indicator of the quality of a school district and a direct reflection of the leadership of the school board and superintendent. A robust arts program demonstrates an understanding that the arts actively engage students in their own learning, giving them a sense of agency and self-worth.

In a recent policy address on education, President Obama stressed the need to prepare students who “possess 21st century skills like problem-solving and critical thinking, entrepreneurship and creativity.” Those are precisely the skills that grow from visual and performing arts studies.

We know that students attending high poverty schools have less access to arts instruction than their peers in more affluent communities. We have a responsibility to ensure that every student benefits from arts education.

As you make your budget decisions, we appeal to you to protect the goal of a complete, well-rounded education for every student. Together we can help to prepare the next generation to be engaged citizens, compassionate neighbors, and thriving workers. The future is now.