

Cultural Affairs Committee Mtg

Oversight Hearing for NYC Cultural Plan

Monday February 27, 2017

Remarks to Committee from Lisa Robb, The Center for Arts Education, 266 W 37th St, 9th fl, NY, NY 10018, lisa@caenyc.org, 212-239-7829.

I am Lisa Robb the Executive Director at The Center for Arts Education. I join the staff and the Board of The Center, in thanking you for the opportunity to address the city council during the development of a Cultural Plan for the people who live, work, visit and play in NYC.

The hundreds of meetings and workshops and hearings about the plan should, if realizing the full promise of public input, recommend rigorous review, careful disruption and overall strengthening of the current systems and processes in place to deliver arts and culture programs. The plan must as it has promised address the inequity in access and experience too many residents experience.

My comments today will focus on one aspect of the plan: how its recommendations and goals for arts education would best serve NYC's 1.1 million public school students and their families, teachers and school leaders.

It is important to remember that in NYC, NYS and all the other cities and states in America, the most powerful and comprehensive set of laws and regulations established for arts and cultural policy and therefore cultural enfranchisement are in arts education in public schools.

Arts education is a strong component of a well rounded education that prepares students for college, the 21st century job market, and citizenship. Arts learning is a required curriculum subject at every grade level and a HS graduation requirement in every public school in America - including the 1800+ schools in NYC.

Therefore, above all, we support a cultural plan that holds this as a core recommendation: every year, in every school, every student receives the arts instruction they are entitled to by law.

To implement this goal, we recommend funds be made available for a comprehensive cost and implementation study on what arts education compliance would cost and how, over five years, the goal would be achieved. We do not want to have full compliance dismissed as impossible, too hard, having too many nuances, etc.

We know that careful planning and funding can make a difference in arts education. The plan should also recommend that 2014's bold four year initiative of \$92M in new funding for arts education be renewed and increased when it expires in 2018. This funding is starting to close the equity and experience gap in arts education. DOE data shows the powerful and positive impact in schools and classrooms which had the least. But that does not mean there are enough art teachers, arts classrooms, cultural partnerships and elementary classroom teachers trained in arts learning.

Another recommendation we support is that the plan establish a goal and process for every school to have a cultural partnership with an arts organization. Here in one of the globe's cultural capitals, only 87% of the schools have a partnership.

We recommend a program be developed, at the borough level, to ensure these 200+ schools find cultural partners immediately.

We have many more granular suggestions for the plan and arts education and we will be submitting those as part of the public intake process.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address the committee today.

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