Art Budget Cuts Essay, Research Paper

I?d

like to inform you about the great deal of budget cuts happening everyday in our

public school systems. One of the hardest hit is in our arts and music

departments. The battle over NEA funding and other important foundations that

are set up to benefit our youths are being challenged by the government at an

alarming rate. Cutbacks in our schools budget force students in these

departments to go without necessary supplies that are essential in the learning

process. I?d also like to show you why art and music education is essential to

our children?s learning process, how it allows them to grow up to be well

rounded citizens, and why as a country, we need to fight to save these programs.

It seems to be a continuous battle for art and music educations demand for some

respect. Many legislators feel the problem in our schools is that budgets where

not amended to fit the rise of costs in our economy. And because of this there

simply aren?t simple ways to fund these programs. Other reasons for problems

in the arts and music departments budget is that even though there is inadequate

funding schools pass programs without promise of long-term support. Thus,

creating a cycle of budget problems. This is our problem. One particular agency,

out of many, the NEA is facing problems that are similar to most in the art and

music debates. ?The conservatives are pressing the case that, in the time of

tight federal budgets, taxpayers cannot afford funding for the agency, which

received a $99 million appropriation for fiscal 1997. The critics also argue

that the agency continues to fund pornographic and blasphemous

projects.(Freedman,p.624)? As stated by Allan Freedman of Government and

Commerce magazine, sums up the views some government officials are having

concerning the NEA, an organization set up to benefit those in the art

community. This organization is a powerful factor in terms of art education. The

organization looks at all different types of art forms, such as poetry,

painting, jewelry, ceramics, as well as dealing with the issues of art

education. These feelings by leading government officials are being expressed in

all aspects of funding for the arts and music. The NEA is causing quite a stir

in congress, and also according to Freedman, ? ? in 1995, the agency?s

foes not only managed to push through major budget cuts, but secured a pledge

from the house leadership to eliminate the agency?(Freedman,p.624)? But why?

Does our government really not have enough money? Of course it does, that?s

not the problem, the problem is that we have not reached the point where we can

have a perfect budget. Where we can distribute our funds properly. According to

the same article, Rick A. Lazio of New York, one of the chief Republican NEA

defenders in the house, ? We spend more on military marching bands then we do

on the endowment.(Freedman,p.624)? There are many polices, budget and funding

issues that need to be looked over, some are out-dated, some miss used, and

others just not effective in our educational system today. Let?s face it the

?perfect budget? will never happen, the economy is ever-changing and the

same goes for dealing with and handing out the funds. Both state and government

agencies who deal with the budget of our art and music programs need to deal

with what is before them. If there is not enough means of funding, then outside

groups need to make up for that. This is why organization such as the NEA need

to be supported not fought. Not everybody in our government is opposed to

adequately funding our art and music education departments, in fact according to

Arts Education and School Improvement Resources For Local and State Leaders,

"The Congress finds that — "1) the arts are forms of understanding

and ways of knowing that are fundamentally important to education; "2) the

arts are important to excellent education and to effective school reform;

"3) the most significant contribution of the arts to education reform is

the transformation of teaching and learning; "4) such transformation is

best realized in the context of comprehensive, systemic education reform;

"5) demonstrated competency in the arts for American students is among the

National Education Goals; "6) participation in performing arts activities

has proven to be an effective strategy for promoting the inclusion of persons

with disabilities in mainstream settings; "7) opportunities in the arts

have enabled persons of all ages with disabilities to participate more fully in

school and community activities; "8) the arts can motivate at-risk students

to stay in school and become active participants in the educational process; and

"9) arts education should be an integral part of the elementary and

secondary school curriculum." These feelings are actually abundant in

Washington. In fact our president as well as Al Gore are focusing hard on the

idea of reforming our educational system in order to give these programs the

money they need to be effective. According to The New York Times quoting Bill

Clinton, ? Education has been an important dividing line between those who are

able to move ahead and those who lag behind.(Clinton,p.16)? And Bill

Clinton?s budget proposals give strength to that. ? The education budget

calls for spending $1.75 billion, up $450 million from this fiscal

year.(Clinton,p.16)? His Plan gives a high priority to wiring classrooms for

the internet, hiring more teachers, reducing class size, as well as fixing up

dilapidated schools. Gore of course is following the presidents path of holding

education in top priority. But with all this talk about the budget being brought

up to date, where is the proof. The lack of funding is causing a drought as far

as supplies are concerned. Maybe I should reiterate, lack of resources is a

better way to put it because now we are losing not only our supplies, but our

programs and teachers. The dedicated school teachers we are still fortunate to

have are being forced to spend a great deal of their own money on their students

supplies. According to Art Education magazine, in a study they did on classroom

budgets, ? The average yearly budgets run the gamut from nothing to

$9,000?73% of the respondents indicated that they normally spend their own

money on additional art supplies- at an average of $348.32 per year. The range

of out-of-pocket spending among these respondents extended from $25 to $5000

per-year, with 21% of the teachers stated that they spend at least $500 each

school year.(p.7)? The dedication of our teachers is incredible. In many cases

these teachers are putting their students welfare and needs over their own. One

such instance occurred in the San Francisco school system with a special

education teacher by the name of Bill Gallimore. ? Gallimore?,makes $31,00.

His students, all disabled children in grades three, four, and five, have so

many basic needs that he already has spent $500 on classroom supplies this

semester. Because the school district only pays teachers just once a month,

Gallimore had to decide between buying the supplies or paying his phone bill.

Pacific Bell turned off his phone.(Asmiov,p.A21)? Is this the kind of thing we

want our educators to have to deal with. All throughout my school career I

remember my teachers having to do the same things. I remember being in high

school ceramics and by January we were without clay, so my teacher had to spend

her own hard earned money on us the rest of the year. You can imagine how nerve

racking it would be to deal with this kind of budget. All normal lesson plans

would have to be thrown out the window in order to stretch your funds to last

the whole year. What possibilities are open to students interested in these

subjects. I would find it hard for a child to get interested in playing an

instrument with no instruments available. Arts and music are important to our

children in many ways. A child doesn?t necessarily have to grow up to be a

scientist, doctor, or lawyer. There are an abundant careers available in these

fields such as graphic design, music production, as well as advertising. Many

studies show that the arts and music provide children with an interest in

learning all of their subjects. Not only do these classes provide a break in a

hard day of academics, but they give students a chance to free their minds an

bodies of the stress that comes along with school in general. Also children

become better all around students, being able to deal better with group skills,

independent creative thought, problem solving, risk taking, along with helping

some students with their self esteem and self expression. It takes a lot to

perform a music ensamble, you need not only practice but to deal with all that

comes along when students need to do a presentation. This kind of experience

will be an asset to anybody in a career position. When students tend to take

pride in their work as an artist they begin to take pride in them selves.

According to Art Education Policy Review, ?Arts education promotes

self-expression, creativity, intuitive, and sensory-oriented learning. In

addition, arts education fosters both discipline and cognitive and emotional

development. It also contributes to the nations goals for teaching and learning:

for example, improving the high school graduation rate, promoting student

achievement in challenging subject matter, fostering a disciplined environment.

The public discourse on U.S. competitiveness in the world economy spotlights the

values of problem solving, risk taking, higher-order thinking skills, teamwork

and creativity. These values are part of the arts and art

education.(Hanna,p.37)? Art and music education is important for all these

reasons, the point of art and music isn?t to take a students mind off of his

or her academics, but to prepare them for adulthood. The government needs to

insure these programs in our school, and make sure they get the attention they

deserve. I hope I have explained the importance of funding for the Arts and

music programs in our public schools. It is essential to be aware what?s going

on in our schools. Our children?s and countries welfare may depend on it!