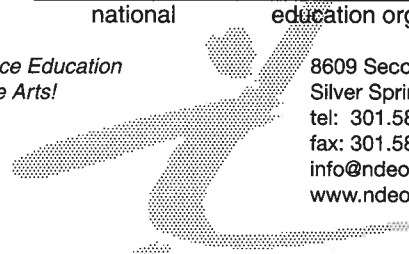




national dance education organization

Advances Dance Education
Centered in the Arts!

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Dear Members of Congress:

The National Dance Education Organization is proud to be a National Co-Sponsor of Arts Advocacy Day 2008. As such, we urge members of the House and Senate to consider the benefits of high quality arts education in these United States; and support legislation to promote and support the continued growth of quality and access to the arts for the nation's children. The U.S faces a large number of challenges in the next few years, including how to address the needs of immigrant children, rises in poverty levels, homelessness, and the needs of differently-abled students in our schools. All of these challenges occur in a context of a diminishing economy and a loss of stature in the world.

All of the recent evidence, however, documents that the arts can make a difference in the lives of children, and that children who create, whether through dance, music, visual art, or theatre, do not get left behind. In fact, they tend to lead the way!

The National Dance Education Organization is the voice for dance arts education with a mission to "advance dance centered in the arts." Toward this end, NDEO believes the following actions must be addressed:

- **Develop quality dance programs in all schools.**
According to numbers from 1996, only 7% of America's children have dance experiences in schools that are taught by a qualified dance specialist. Therefore, we know that, as of over ten years ago, most children were left out of the rich experiences of creating and performing dance and learning through dance. We need current statistics to track our progress and the FRSS could provide that information. We urge Congress to help us follow the progress of access to such quality experiences through improved and inclusive surveys. We also urge the inclusion of dance in the National Assessment of Educational Progress so we can determine the impact of high quality dance programs on the learners.
- **Promote standards-based dance education.**
Much of the dance education experiences children do receive in public schools do not meet the *Standards for Learning and Teaching Dance in the Arts*, which were developed by the nation's leading dance educators. These standards need to be disseminated and evaluated in the field in order for the learning to improve in the classroom and studio.
- **Provide professional development through professional teaching standards and certification.**
NDEO has recently developed *Professional Teaching Standards* to insure that the children have the best instruction possible, and that teacher candidates have sufficient content and pedagogical knowledge to address the needs of all children. Only a few states that do not certify dance educators remain. We would like to see all 50 states engaged in the highest degree of professional preparation in standards-based teaching.
- **Develop model programs that can be replicated for all populations.**
NDEO has also developed criteria for model dance education programs that are designed to be taught by qualified educators in a graduated curriculum for all populations. Such experiences are vitally important to the health and development of all children, regardless of native talent, and need to be disseminated nationally.

Students who study dance test higher on the SATs (36 points on the verbal and 15 points higher on the math sections) and students of minority multicultural populations test as kinesthetic learners, but only 20% of U.S schools have dance programs and only 7% of those students are taught by a qualified dance educator. Every child deserves an opportunity to learn through, present, and create through dance.

Sincerely,

Jane Bonbright, Ed.D.
Executive Director