



July 15, 3016

**In response to RFI #ADED16-0002**

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the board of directors of Arizona Citizens for the Arts, our 86 statewide arts and culture organization members and our 5,000 supporters, we are submitting this request that the Arizona School and Local Education Agency Accountability System (or School Report Card) currently in development fully **recognize and incorporate the critical role that high quality, standards-based arts education taught by “highly qualified” teachers plays in promoting academic achievement in our young people.**

Volumes of quantitative and qualitative data exists nationally and in Arizona to demonstrate that the arts taught to our state standards in creative and innovative ways contributes to dramatic improvements in student achievement. The impact of arts education integrated across curriculum has also been specifically credited with positive change in reading, thinking skills, language development and even mathematics.

**We believe these results – documented by others who have submitted responses to this RFI – are compelling enough to merit credit in the “rating “ formula under development for two purposes: 1)to acknowledge the positive effects already being demonstrated by those schools who teach arts to our standards, and 2) to create a positive incentive that will encourage schools to give more attention to providing quality arts education.**

Quite simply, it only fair and equitable, that ALL Arizona students have the opportunity to experience the benefits of quality arts education.

Arizona Citizens for the Arts is by no means alone in recognizing that arts plays a critical role in the intellectual development of our young people. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) -- one of the very reasons for the revision of the School Report Card – defines arts as a part of a “well-rounded” education.

The Arizona Administrative Code **requires the instruction in music and the arts in K-8 schools**, and some of the most effective uses of money provided to Arizona through Title 1 of the federal Elementary and Secondary Schools Act have been for innovative arts education that is helping to close the achievement gap for students in Title1-designated schools.

Yet, in Arizona, we know that 44% of our district schools do NOT offer both arts and music taught by “highly qualified teachers,”, leaving26% of our students without the opportunity to benefit from a quality arts education. **We believe it is time for us to go to work on closing that gap.**

**A positive incentive incorporated into the School Report card formula would be one important way to promote the value of arts education** while leaving the actual decision as to whether all of their students deserve the opportunity of an arts education in the hands of the local districts. At the same time, schools who DO teach arts to our state standards would be rewarded.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit comments about the proposed accountability system, and are ready to be of any assistance we can as discussion proceeds on the elements of the formula.

Additionally, we are uploading several other documents that we believe outline the gap between Arizona's policy on arts education and the actual practice in our schools.

Again, we believe that an arts education component in the accountability formula would be a positive incentive to increasing the availability of quality arts education in our schools.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rusty Foley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Catherine "Rusty" Foley  
Executive Director