



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EFFORTS UNDERWAY TO SUPPORT ARTS IN EDUCATION PROGRAMS, ADVOCACY IN ARIZONA AS NATIONAL ARTS IN EDUCATION WEEK PUTS FOCUS ON LEARNING BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN

PHOENIX, Ariz. (Sept. 10, 2018): As the nation celebrates National Arts in Education Week, Arizona Citizens for the Arts (AzCA) is leading efforts to support and enhance the focus and sustainability of arts education programs and advocacy statewide.

Passed by Congress in 2010, National Arts in Education Week brings attention to the benefits of arts education for elected officials and educational decision makers nationwide and supports equitable access to the arts for all learners. To that end, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 included the arts in the definition of a well-rounded education as a result of significant research demonstrating the positive impact of the arts in teaching and learning to develop a 21st century workforce.

And yet, a new report released this week by the Arizona Department of Education and the Arizona Commission on the Arts points to the challenge of ensuring arts instruction access and participation in the arts for students in Arizona. The Arts Education Data Project Report, prepared by Quadrant Research, showed that only 65 percent of K-8 students had access to both music and arts education as required by state education code.

The report also showed that access to the two required disciplines for elementary and middle schools is lowest in schools where more than 75 percent of students receive free and reduced-price lunch. According to the report, public schools, which represent 84 percent of the population, also represent 80 percent of “no arts” students while charter schools hold 20 percent of the “no arts” students. Charter schools represent 16 percent of the overall student population.

To address the challenge in Arizona, Arizona Citizens for the Arts is leading a statewide effort to design a sustainable, effective Arts Education Advocacy strategy and movement.

With funding from The David and Lura Lovell Foundation of Tucson, the first phase of a strategic planning includes online and in-person “listening sessions” for input, thoughts and suggestions from individuals, arts and business leaders, arts and education advocates and the general public.

“While we know that many Arizona students are receiving a rich arts education in our schools, we are also challenged to work to ensure that every Arizona student has an equitable chance at an arts education,” said AzCA Executive Director Catherine “Rusty” Foley. “Given the remarkable impact of an

arts education on academic achievement, student engagement and improved self-image, we must make sure that every Arizona student reaps the benefits of a quality education.”

Foley said that the strategy being developed will assist statewide arts advocates and educators to “secure equity in access to arts education and articulate the role of the arts as a pathway to academic success.” She encouraged participation in the input-collection phase of the strategy by completing the online survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YVNFZ2N>.

At the state level, the goal of the advocacy strategy will be to support AzCA’s efforts to promote state policies, statutes and administrative codes that encourage arts education in our schools, Foley said, especially in the design of school accountability plans, curriculum requirements and the local annual school needs assessments.

Former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has said that encouraging and ensuring access to arts education is particularly important in educating students of color, students in rural communities, students classified as low socio-economic status, English Language Learners or those requiring special education.

“This is absolutely an equity issue and a civil rights issue,” Duncan said. A report from the National Center for Education Statistics has found that high-poverty schools are significantly less likely to provide students with access to arts education.

“When students learn through the arts, they flourish in school, in work, and in life,” said Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts. “It is critical that we keep an ongoing dialogue with elected officials and educational decision-makers about the arts as an essential part of a complete education. Arts in Education Week is the perfect time to recognize and share the message of this impact with friends, family, and community members.”

For more information about National Arts in Education Week, visit www.NationalArtsinEducationWeek.org. For more information about the arts advocacy strategic planning, email artsedcollab@azcitizensforthearts. For more information about Arizona Citizens for the Arts, visit www.azcitizensforthearts.org.

-30-

Contacts:

- Catherine “Rusty” Foley, Executive Director, Arizona Citizens for the Arts, (602) 253-6535
- Steve Carr, The Kur Carr Group, Inc., (602) 317-3040

Arizona Citizens for the Arts, a 37-year-old 501 c3 organization, acts as the eyes, ears and voice of the nonprofit arts and culture sector in Arizona at the State Legislature, in local city halls and partnerships with business and community leaders involved in building and supporting quality of life in Arizona. For more information, visit www.azcitizensforthearts.org or call (602) 253-6535.