



PUBLIC CITIZENS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Statement by Gretchen Elise Walker

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School Reform Commission

School District of Philadelphia

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Good evening commissioners. My name is Gretchen Elise Walker and I represent two arts initiatives — Picasso Project and ArtsRising – both of which work to increase youth access to the arts in Philadelphia public schools. Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight.

ArtsRising put out a call for testimony to schools and communities in support of retaining arts education teachers in the School District of Philadelphia. We know the School Reform Commission and principals need to make difficult budget priorities right now about what to keep and what to cut. Within the spectrum of essential curricular programs for students, please remember arts education. Please remember the teachers who deliver consistent, sequential arts education to students on a daily basis, so the students can reach their potential. **These are teachers of instrumental music, general & vocal music, visual arts, dance and drama.**

Attached is testimony submitted by 18 individuals. Among those are:

- The director of ArtsRising, who points to increased PSSA scores at Philadelphia schools studied that have more arts teachers ON STAFF;
- A Math professor who points to the importance of arts education to advance in many fields, including STEM;
- Art education professors from Temple and UArts;
- Former CAO of the school district of Philadelphia
- A school principal
- Two SDP art teacher
- Independent artists
- Directors of arts non-profits
- Active community individuals

Though academics argue about whether the connection is correlational or causal, there is wide agreement that the arts:

increase engagement in school,

improve school climate,

can transform school experiences for disengaged and special needs students,

and improve academic performance.

Please keep supporting District positions in instrumental music, general & vocal music, visual arts, dance and drama.

Thank you for your time.