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LOS ANGELES COUNTY SCHOOLS SHOW IMPROVEMENT IN ARTS EDUCATION
Arts Education Important to Student Learning and to Workforce

LOS ANGELES — Arts education for K-12 in Los Angeles County is showing significant improvement for the first time in more than a generation, says a new report released today (2/11) by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission.

The 2008 Arts Education Performance Indicators Report shows an increase in the number of school districts that are building infrastructure in this area, demonstrating a long-term commitment to improving arts education. The report is issued periodically by the Arts Commission as part of the county's regional *Arts for All* initiative to return quality, sequential arts education to the county's 81 school districts. Overall progress includes:

- 64 percent of districts report having an arts education policy, compared to 37 percent in 2005.
- 61 percent of districts report a board-adopted arts education plan or indicated they are developing one, compared to 35 percent in 2005.
- 39 percent of districts report having an arts coordinator, compared to 12 percent in 2005.
- 16 percent report having a 400 to 1 ratio of students to credentialed arts teachers, compared to 10 percent reporting that ratio in 2005.
- 98 percent of districts report using general fund budgets to support arts education programs (sources of arts ed budgets were not included in previous surveys).

The 2008 AEPI Report is based on self-reported data from superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors of curriculum and/or district arts coordinators. Of the 81 school districts, 72 responded.

Thirty-four area school districts – representing nearly 476,531 students – are building infrastructure through community arts teams working under the guidance of coaches provided by *Arts for All*. This represents an increase from 15 districts that were developing the arts education infrastructure under *Arts for All* in 2005, when the commission last issued its report.

“This generation will benefit from markedly stronger arts education in Los Angeles County,” said Laura Zucker, executive director of the Los Angeles County Arts Commission. “This is good news for both the students and for employers. The *Arts for All* initiative, in particular, focuses on how learning builds from year to year and how arts education helps students think creatively and solve problems.”

These abilities are essential in today's marketplace. President Barack Obama states in his cultural plan, “To remain competitive in the global economy, America needs to reinvigorate the kind of creativity and innovation that has made this country great. To do so, we must nourish our children's creative skills. In addition to giving our children the science and math skills they need to compete in the new global context, we should also encourage the ability to think creatively that comes from a meaningful arts education.”

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Schools Show Improvements in Arts Education/add one

Arts for All started in Los Angeles County in 2002 and now serves as a national model for arts education. The most recent recognition was a \$1.2 million Wallace Foundation grant that will enable the initiative to build on the achievements of its first six years and expand its ability to increase the impact of the arts in classrooms.

The AEPI report shows that the initiative is working: *Arts for All* districts are significantly more likely than other districts in the region to adopt arts education policies and plans and hire arts coordinators. Between 2005 and 2008 *Arts for All* districts adopted policies at 2.5 times the rate of other districts and plans at 1.6 times the rate of other districts. The number of arts coordinators in *Arts for All* districts increased by 44 percent versus a 15 percent increase in other school districts.

Notable examples of progress can be discerned across Los Angeles County, both in districts engaged in the initiative and those that are not.

Currently 6 school districts possess four of the five key indicators of a sound arts education infrastructure: school board-adopted policies and plans, district-level arts coordinators, arts education budget allocations of at least 5 percent of total district budget and a ratio of students to credentialed arts teachers of 400 to 1 or lower. The districts are **Beverly Hills, Burbank, Los Angeles, Palos Verdes Peninsula, Santa Monica Malibu** and **Whittier Union**.

Compton Unified School District has mandated one class period per week of arts education for all students.

Culver City Unified School District, as the home for *Arts for All's* Professional Artist Training Program, is a center for quality arts learning. Students and teachers have direct involvement in and access to dance, theater, music and visual arts incorporated into the core curriculum.

The survey was conducted by Americans for the Arts in July 2008 and was commissioned by the *Arts for All* Executive Committee.

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The Los Angeles County Arts Commission, Laura Zucker, executive director, provides leadership in cultural services of all disciplines for the United States' largest county, encompassing 88 municipalities. The arts commission, in addition to providing leadership and staffing to support Arts for All, administers a grants program that funds more than 300 nonprofit arts organizations annually, oversees the County's Civic Art Program for capital projects, funds the largest arts internship program in the country in conjunction with the Getty Foundation, programs the John Anson Ford Theatres and supports the Los Angeles County Cultural Calendar on ExperienceLA.com. The Arts Commission also produces free community programs, including the L.A. Holiday Celebration broadcast nationally, and a year-round music program that funds more than 50 free concerts each year in public sites. The 2008-09 President of the Arts Commission is Betty Haagen.

MEDIA NOTE: A full copy of the report and district-specific data are available. These materials also are embargoed until 12:01 a.m. Feb. 11, 2009.