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PRESERVATION**

**Arts Education
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Arts Education Event at Adrien Block Intermediate School #25
Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
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Thank you. Thank you so much, Kyle. Thank you for the introduction, but more than that, thank you for talking so eloquently about the role of dance and the arts in your life. And I also want to thank the musicians you heard earlier and the chorus you heard just now for their performance. And I'd like to give both Kyle and the musicians and the choral singers another round of applause. Thank you all.

As I was listening to the singing, I thought about my own experience—a tone deaf person who in elementary school was told that I could sit with my friends in the soprano section of the school chorus if I lip-synched. And so I was always impressed when I could hear the beautiful voices, particularly of young people. And in a way it is those voices—whether they are voices singing, or voices giving some expression in dance, or the voice of an artist, as I saw earlier today, sculpting or using pastels or painting—it is really that sense of the vital voice of the young people throughout our country that we celebrate today.

I saw some of the work, and any of you who have walked through the halls of this beautiful school have seen it as well. Work that is done not just on special occasions when the arts are celebrated in a marginal way, but work that is done through the arts, using the arts in ways to learn—as we saw in the Mentoring Magic video—in every aspect of the education here at this school. I really am impressed because this school district, as many have already spoken about, has really put arts education at the center of the learning that goes on. And that is especially important in today's world. Because we know how significant education is, and particularly how important it is that young people learn how to express themselves. To find ways, as Kyle told us, to use their feelings that maybe come up in a lunch room argument with another student, in productive ways, in ways that allow them to release those feelings, in ways that permit them to learn. And we have seen that firsthand here.

I want to thank Congressman Ackerman for being here with us and for his commitment to education. As a former teacher, I sometimes think he is still teaching about issues that are important to his constituents and our country. I want to thank the Queens Borough President, my friend Claire Shulman, for being with us and for always worrying about what is happening with the people of Queens. You know, as we were walking in, Claire said to me, "This is a beautiful school, but I'm worried because we have so many young people, so many children in this borough now, I'm not sure we'll have enough seats and places for all of them in the years to come." She's always thinking about the future, and because of that she's done a superb job. I am glad she could join us here today.

I'm also pleased that the Deputy Mayor is with us, as is the Acting Superintendent. I'm delighted that Dr. Judy Rizzo and many staff and members of the New York City Board of

Education who are our hosts today could be with us. And I particularly want to thank Principal Gibson, her Assistant Principals, the faculty, the staff, and especially the students of this school for welcoming all of us here today.

I am also pleased to be here with Jane Pauley. We have seen Jane's skills on television, but she's here today not only in her role as a professional, but as the daughter of a musician, as the mother of three children, and as a citizen of this city who has made a personal commitment to arts education and is really making a difference. So I thank you, Jane, personally on behalf of your work.

And Dr. Brademas—John Brademas—you have been extraordinary in every role you have taken on and in your latest incarnation as the leader of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. You have helped draw national attention to what those of us who love the arts and appreciate its role in the life of our society have known for a long time—that the arts are not marginal; that they are central to who we are as a people; and that they are certainly critical, as we heard from that wonderful John Adams quote that the Congressman read, they are critical to future generations as well.

Now, none of this that we are celebrating today and the report that I'm going to officially release in a few minutes would have happened without the tenacity and support of Dick Deasy and the Arts Education Partnership, and of Harriet Fulbright and Rich Gurin at the President's Committee. And I am particularly pleased to thank Rich, who is retiring. He is retiring from Binney & Smith, and many of us got our first introduction to the arts by being handed that big box of Crayolas and being told, "Go ahead and do something with it." And so, Rich, on behalf of many of us who care about the arts and children, thank you for being a true friend to arts education.

This has been a true partnership. Our partners in the private sector have been very supportive—especially Jane Polin and the GE Fund, who've been there from the very first day, as Jane Pauley said; Nick Rabkin and the Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; and Binney & Smith in its corporate capacity as well.

I first heard about this district's extraordinary commitment to the arts when two parents from IS #25 came to see me at the White House—Valerie and Kenneth Cohen. And I think they are here today. Are they? Will you raise your hands, Valerie and Kenneth? Mr. and Mrs. Cohen came to the White House back in September to help us launch a national campaign to put arts back in the schools in our country. And I remember Valerie talking about what happened when her daughter saw her creative work published—the sense of confidence and pride it gave her and how it made her even more interested in school—and how she understood the connection between what she enjoyed doing and the other learning that was taking place in her classes.

And I have heard the same story from so many places around our country. I have met

children who literally would not talk until they were finally introduced to an arts program. In Washington, D.C., through a program funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, I met children who were writing their own poetry. I went to a school that mostly served children from a nearby housing project—a very tough neighborhood. And I met these young people who came to school every day through some very difficult circumstances. But because of the poetry program at that school, they were learning how to express their ideas and feelings. And I listened to some of their poetry as they engaged in what is called a poetry slam, where different young people stood up and recited the poetry that they wrote. And it was like an Olympics competition—other young people held up cards to show whether that was an eight, or a nine, or a ten.

Now one young person wrote about the plight of a homeless man that she stepped around every day on her way to school. Another wrote about the genius of Duke Ellington. And when one young man read his poem, it included this memorable line, “I am so musical that when I write songs, you sing them for the rest of your life.” I also listened as these young men and women told me how being in a poetry class, sponsored by the NEA with a resident poet, was helping them cope with a lot of difficult circumstances. They were learning how to control their feelings, understand their feelings, and express them.

I’m told there was a wonderful moment during the Second World War when advisers urged Winston Churchill to cut Great Britain’s arts budget. He responded emphatically, “No! What do you think we’re fighting for?” He understood that the arts speak to the very heart of who we are as a people and a nation. Every one of us who has ever seen a child perform or produce a piece of art—whether it goes into a gallery or on our refrigerator held up by a magnet—knows that feeling and what it ignites in a child’s heart, mind and soul.

Well, now we know something else. We know through research that exposing children to the arts, particularly exposing children to music at an early age, not only sparks their creativity, it improves their spatial reasoning, which can boost later achievement in math and science. The arts engage children in learning and really encourage them to explore and think about other subjects as well. And programs like Learning to Read Through the Arts, which started in New York 25 years ago, have shown us that arts can help students learn to read better and want to read more.

And yet, in place after place throughout our country, I’ve been told time and again that the first course that is cut when the budget crunches come are the arts courses. And any one of us who saw that wonderful movie, *Mr. Holland’s Opus*, and can remember the kinds of arts programs that flourished all over our country in the 1950s and 60s, would be astonished to learn how little of that is now available in many parts of our country to our children today.

We recently tested 8th graders in the arts in our country as part of the National Assessment of Education Progress, which included arts education. And of course we found out, unfortunately, that too many young people are not understanding the arts, not appreciating the

arts, and not being given a chance to do even the simplest kind of arts work. But the good news that we found is that if arts are provided broadly to all students, not just to those who already show a talent or have an interest but to every student, then progress can be demonstrably made and all children can learn in ways that we had not thought possible before.

The report that I am privileged to issue today, called *Gaining the Arts Advantage*, is the first national study examining successful arts programs in school districts across our country. It looked at 91 different districts in 42 states. Now these districts are very diverse. They spend anywhere from \$3,800 to \$15,000 per student. They have anywhere from 1,800 to 340,000 students. But they all had one thing in common.

The report found that the single most critical factor in creating and sustaining arts education programs was the involvement of the entire community. Now, certainly the leadership of the educators whom I have met in looking at the art work that was done and the room that I visited and seeing the chorus perform—certainly educators are absolutely critical. But they cannot do it alone. It takes families, artists and arts organizations, businesses, colleges, civic leaders, cultural institutions—all of us supporting the arts and our arts educators.

My husband often says that there isn't a problem in America that isn't being solved by someone somewhere. So I hope this report serves as a roadmap for every community that wants to bring the arts either back into their schools, or to understand how to sustain an arts program and build it into the future. You can look right here to District 25 for an example. You can learn about how parents have gotten involved and have even, as I learned from the Cohens last Fall, been engaged in writing grants to be able to get more funding to support the arts in the school.

District 25 is an example of the partnership that sustains the arts in the schools. You have benefited from the Annenberg Grants to restore arts education, as well as support of the New York State Education Department. And you won federal support from the Title VII Grants and the National Endowment for the Arts. And it's very significant that the Arts Plus Program with the City Center, which received federal money for a three-year grant, helped to shape the dance program that I saw exhibited. The New York State Council on the Arts and the cultural and university resources of Flushing in New York also enriched your program. To find this kind of cooperation that brings together all levels of government, the public and the private sector is exactly the message that this report tries to get out. We need all the help and support we can get to return arts to their rightful place within our schools.

But it's not just in big cities and not just in districts like this that can access the resources I just referred to, but we can find the arts flourishing in many small and out of the way places. For example, the school district on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming has found that community members using the arts can both educate and pass down their cultural heritage. And then the high school students from that Indian reservation can see their work exhibited at the state museum, and local businesses will provide art scholarships to especially promising

students.

You know, Jane talked about my experience in a district that is actually featured here in the report, where I grew up and went to public school in Park Ridge, Illinois. All the seniors there are tested in dance, music, theater, and the visual arts to make sure that they do leave school culturally literate. Now I remember very well that I could never have passed any dance performance or singing performance, but if it had not been for my public education, I would have never heard an opera, I would have never seen a lot of the great paintings until perhaps I had gone to college or gone away from home. So I was lucky enough to be exposed to and taught how to appreciate the arts, even though personally I was not much of a participant. Well, that's also part of the goal. Not everyone can dance, not everyone can sing or sculpt, but everyone can learn to appreciate the arts and their contributions to our diverse culture and society. We need to send a message to all of our children that we value them, that they are important, that they have skills and talents that we cherish and need in our society.

Now that means a lot of things. It means making sure that we have enough seats in enough buildings that are up to speed here in New York and around our country to take care of the biggest baby boom that we have ever had. We have more children in school today than we've ever had in the United States, and we don't have enough classrooms and we have too many old schools that are literally falling down around our students and our teachers. So we need to be sure that we have the construction and the maintenance and the support for the physical plans that will enable our children to learn and to know when they walk in the door of a beautiful, well-kept school like this, that they are valued.

We also have to be sure we set high standards for students and teachers alike and to make it possible for every student to get the skills they will need to be not only a good worker, but a good parent, a good citizen. And that is the goal of public education, and that is why the arts play such a central role in fulfilling that role. No one could negate what has happened at this school in this district. And I hope it does serve as an example for every school in New York City, New York State, and the United States. I hope that the lessons that we put forth in this report will be studied and learned from; and that businesses all over America, community foundations and other philanthropic institutions will say we can do this, we can make the arts once again alive in the lives of our students and our teachers, and public education can serve the entire child.

Now some students don't learn well just sitting and listening. They need to move, they need to use their hands, they need to be challenged in different ways. And I hope that as we look toward the new century and even this new millennium that awaits us, we will understand what John Adams and Plato and other people going back through history understood so well—that the arts are truly part of who we are; they define us as individuals; they push our spirits to soar; they give us a chance to think beyond our boundaries. And by doing so, they create not just individual opportunity, but they create that wonderful ferment in society that opens eyes and opens hearts and opens minds.

So this report will encourage school districts all over our country to learn from this district and the other 90 that are profiled. And I hope that in a year or two, as the new century is fully under steam, we can come back to a school like this and we can say that the example you set, the work that you did not only paid off for the students here, but set a fire that went across New York City and New York State and our entire country. And that every student now has the chance, as Kyle was able to demonstrate to us, to stand here with confidence and pride and talk about what a difference the arts made in his or her life.

Thank you all very much.