

District of Columbia State Board of Education
Testimony Presented by Louise Kennelly, Executive Director
DC Arts and Humanities Education Collaborative

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the DC Arts & Humanities Education Collaborative in support of global education for DC students and educators. The DC Arts & Humanities Education Collaborative represents approximately 60 arts and humanities organizations, many of which help students hone the skills necessary to being productive global citizens, introducing them to world cultures and perspectives. As a collective voice, members of the DC Collaborative work together to ensure that DC students and educators have more equitable access to the city's rich array of arts and cultural opportunities.

I'd like to share with you today some of our work related to the field of global education, and how it directly relates to our specific work in the field of arts and humanities education.

We provide arts and humanities experiences to more than 20,000 students a year and support schools in integrating arts across the curriculum. In so many ways, arts education advances the skills necessary to successfully navigate and lead in a global economy, including creativity, innovation, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, flexibility and adaptability.

A world-cultures perspective is inherent in much of our work. Many of our members offer student arts experiences grounded in traditions of other countries and cultures. As an example, the In Series produces an interactive program that teaches students about the history, geography, music and dance of Spain and Latin America. Other examples include "Experience India" at the Gandhi Memorial Center, "Let's Read about Africa" at the National Museum of African Art and "Seasons of Light" at Discovery Theater. In addition, our members offer workshops for teachers to enrich their classroom lessons using the art and traditions of other countries. The depth and breadth of globally focused arts and cultural experiences offered by our membership here in DC provide DCPS and DC charter school students with the potential for an incredibly unique set of learning opportunities.

Every year, the DC Collaborative also partners with the Kids Euro Festival, the nation's largest festival of professional children's performers from Europe. All 27 EU countries participate in the festival. Our experience with the Kids Euro Festival has demonstrated to us that arts education, and education itself, has no borders. Artistic expressions of the human experience enhance our understanding of the world around us. This year alone, the DC Collaborative sent nearly 3,000 DC public and chartered public school students to Kids Euro Festival events. In addition to general excitement about the opportunity to experience arts from other countries, many schools found connections to classroom content.

Many of our member organizations, individual members, and arts education colleagues work to advance culturally responsive education. Every day, educators and arts partners work with students from a myriad of countries and backgrounds. Being able to understand and relate to these young people is crucial to success. But it is also crucial that our young people are able to understand and relate to their peers from different cultures and traditions. Global education not only supports understanding, but also reduces conflict, because it breeds empathy, allowing for opportunities to demonstrate similarities and celebrate differences. This creates a positive learning environment for everyone; and it enables young people from other cultures to feel successful as students and learners. The work of our member organization, the Young Playwrights' Theater, is an example of this. Many of their students are native Spanish-speakers, and for them, the YPT experience is an opportunity to communicate and express themselves more fully. A more robust global education component would create more opportunities such as this.

Another member organization, the Washington Performing Arts Society, has a long-standing and highly successful program, the Embassy Adoption Program which I am sure you'll hear more about from them today.

We encourage the DC State Board of Education to continue the conversation about the importance of global education and to identify new ways global education can be delivered comprehensively to DC students. We would like to be a partner with the schools in helping to deliver on the promise of a comprehensive approach to global education, thereby advancing toward our collective goal of creating a world-class education experience for the District's students. Graduates will be increasingly called upon to demonstrate the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in a global

economy. Adoption of global education standards and a comprehensive global education plan, with arts and humanities being integral to such a plan, will help to support students in meeting those standards and will help students succeed within the context of the increasingly inter-related areas of economy, environment, health, communications, and energy. In the meantime, infusing our efforts to support students in meeting the common core standards with both global education and arts education strategies will advance our progress toward those standards as well.

I thank the members of DC State Board of Education for your continued commitment to DC's students and educators and for this opportunity to provide testimony today.