



October 5, 2005

Dear Colleague:

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of the **S t a t e s**

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As you may be aware, the focus of my two-year term as ECS chairman which began this July, is on arts education. My initiative, "The Arts: A Lifetime of Learning," will concentrate on making sure that every child – from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade – has the opportunity to participate in, learn about and enjoy the arts. I wanted to take a few moments today to make you aware of some important new resources regarding this initiative.

At The 2004 National Forum on Education Policy I gave a speech outlining the parameters of my initiative as incoming ECS chairman. Also at the Forum, I participated in an extended interview with Dick Deasy – who is currently director of the Arts Education Partnership in Washington, D.C. – discussing arts education and the goals for my initiative. Transcripts of both the speech and interview are now available on my initiative Web site, and help flesh out what I think can be accomplished over the next two years as ECS chairman.

<http://www.ecs.org/html/projectsPartners/chair2005/docs/HuckabeeArtsSpeech.doc>
<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/54/67/5467.pdf>

You will see from these transcripts that the arts are a topic I am passionate about. This passion comes not only from the impact which music has had on my own life, it comes also from the positive impacts I have seen on others' lives, especially children. And it is further reinforced by research findings that demonstrate solid academic, cognitive and creative benefits for students who are given the chance to participate in the arts. Such benefits are absolutely indispensable for today's students as they enter an economy that many experts believe will place an increasing premium on creativity in the workplace.

The timing of this ECS initiative, in my opinion, could not be better. These days one often hears the question asked: "During this age of No Child Left Behind, can states really be expected to focus on the arts when there is such pressure to improve student performance in 'core academic' subjects such as reading and math?" The answer, of course, is yes. In fact, the answer *must* be yes, because the arts are themselves considered a core academic subject under NCLB, just like math, science and reading.

This point has now been clearly made by the U.S. Department of Education. In a letter last month to the nation's superintendents, Education Secretary Rod Paige stated emphatically: "the arts are a core academic subject under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). NCLB included the arts as a core academic subject because of their importance to a child's education. No Child Left Behind expects teachers of the arts to be highly qualified, just as it does teachers of English, math, science, and history."

In addition to clearly establishing the arts as a core academic subject under NCLB, Secretary Paige also outlined some examples for how states can take advantage of federal funds to improve their arts education programs. Such funds can play a key role in supporting arts programs, especially in the current fiscal climate. I urge you to review Secretary Paige's important letter, which is now available on the Internet at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/040701.html>.

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The message that my ECS initiative can and must deliver to policymakers across the country is that the arts are as crucial to a student's development as any other subject taught in our schools today. We must do all we can to mobilize, inform, educate and inspire education leaders to recognize the vast potential returns that can be realized by investing now in arts education. I urge you to visit my initiative Web site <http://www.ecs.org/Huckabee> frequently for the latest resources, research and information on arts education, and I look forward to working with you over the next two years and beyond.

Sincerely,
Governor Mike Huckabee
2004-06 ECS Chairman

HELPING STATE LEADERS SHAPE EDUCATION POLICY

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