

ECS & NGA Chairman, Gov. Mike Huckabee Speaks Out on Need for Arts in Schools

Schools Need the Arts

April 2, 2006

To the Editor:

Re "Schools Cut Back Subjects to Push Reading and Math" (front page, March 26):

Across the nation, schools are trimming back financing for music and the arts in the name of "efficiency" and "core subjects." This is beyond short-sighted. It's stupid.

In the name of No Child Left Behind, we are going to leave some of our brightest students totally behind by never touching their talents to sing, paint, act, dance or play an instrument. While experts and futurists warn that the future economy will be driven by the "creative class," there are determined efforts to diminish the value of the arts.

Numerous studies affirm that a student schooled in music improves his or her SAT and ACT scores in math, foreign language or creative writing. Creative students are better problem solvers; that is a trait the business world begs for in its work force.

While the No Child Left Behind standards mandate arts as part of the core curriculum (which is an admirable first at the federal level), many school districts see the arts as expendable, extraneous or extracurricular. They are essential.

Nine out of 10 parents surveyed opposed cuts to the arts in our schools, yet many policy makers seem tone-deaf to this critical part of educating our children. In my state, we by law now insist that every child receive music and art instruction by a certified teacher. It's time that America force the issue and finance it fully. No child should be left behind!

Mike Huckabee
Little Rock, Ark., March 31, 2006