



PUBLIC CITIZENS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH
Statement by Gretchen Elise Walker, Picasso Project Coordinator, PCCY
School District of Philadelphia
Student Reform Commission (SRC)
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I am Gretchen Elise Walker, Picasso Project Coordinator at Public Citizens for Children and Youth, making public comment on behalf of PCCY, which runs the Picasso Project and also serves as part of the collaborative arts initiative ArtsRising.

With Picasso Project, we have been jump starting and supporting arts programs at schools with need in Philadelphia's public school system since 2002 through consistent advocacy and a yearly grant up to \$5,000 to ambitious schools. We've supported 80 projects over 10 years.

I would like the SRC to recognize that over 100 teachers inquired about the Picasso Project awards this fall; we received 32 strong applications and of these we chose 13 projects to grant between \$2,000 and \$4,500 for projects in theater, dance, music, digital media and the visual arts.

Schools are filled with teachers who see the ARTS as the solution to inspire and engage their kids, open windows to understanding of core academic subjects, and heal rifts between students of different cultural backgrounds.

These 100 teachers who inquired about the grant — 80 of them attended workshops about the grant possibility — are inspired and motivated to bring arts to their students, combining school based arts teachers & community partners in innovative ways. While 13 of these fully drawn out, collaborative project proposals will receive support from the Picasso Project in 2012, 19 of their calls for help and support will go unanswered.

In this time of extremely difficult decisions about budget cuts, PLEASE do not forget that arts are a solution to enlightenment, engagement, academic achievement and good climate at our schools. Our teachers know this and this is why they've reached out for more support. Please keep the arts at the center of children's school lives.

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