

## **Testimony before the Philadelphia Board of Education**

Joint Committee Meeting – Finance and Student Achievement

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Presented by Cindy Farlino

Picasso Project Coach, *Public Citizens for Children and Youth*

Former Principal, Meredith Elementary School, Philadelphia

We can only guess as to how our schools will operate in September, but our mission and commitment of all educators remains the same- a high quality educational experience.

And as students return, we know there will be adjustment and even trauma from the experience of the pandemic. Getting students ready to learn will be an important challenge in the return process.

I had the opportunity as a Philadelphia Principal, and now as a Picasso Project coach with PCCY, to see firsthand the impact of the arts on our students. I am speaking today to the School Board because I am fearful that with budget shortfalls looming, the arts may be sacrificed. I want to speak here to stress that the arts in our schools are fundamental to both learning and to student success.

As quality arts education is a core strategy that engages kids in school like nothing else, grow their confidence, and significantly increase the chances of success, the sudden absence of arts in our schools will have the opposite effects and, in the context of a post-COVID school year, be even worse.

I want to quote James Lane, who went to Meredith Elementary School, and now appears on Broadway. He says in his YouTube video,

*“A world opened up for me in the arts that I never known before. I grew up in the projects and my world was bleak. The arts at Meredith School got me engaged and showed me a new way. It gave me language to speak, an emotional language, and courage, and a way to express myself and it changed my life. I attended GAMP after elementary school. I got full a scholarship to Carnegie Mellon University and to seven other universities. Let me be clear, it was the arts that changed my life.”*

Our kids deserve full fair school funding and NO cuts to the arts.