

Testimony before the Philadelphia Board of Education

Joint Committee Meeting – Finance and Student Achievement

May 14, 2020

Presented by Shauneille Taylor, Principal of Edward Gideon School, Philadelphia

Good Evening,

I am Shauneille Taylor, a former xylophone player of Mr. Hammond's music ensemble at the now closed Alexander Wilson Elementary School, an alumnus of the District 1 All-City Choir from 1984 to 1986, and currently, I am the proud Principal of Edward Gideon Elementary School.

Our mission at Gideon is to provide our students with a "caring and collaborative learning community, that ensures every student will discover their potential and achieve readiness for college and career pathways."

Small elementary schools, such as ours, suffer the most when school budgets are cut. We implore the local, state and federal governments to find ways to restore the budget shortfall that is looming.

Gideon is a wonderful school with amazing students who face deep challenges.

One of the bright spots is our arts program. Access to the arts levels the playing field for the poorest and most at-risk students. The arts enhance the process of learning, developing motor skills, language skills, and creates social responsibility in students.

An example in Gideon is our dance program. Many students come in at 7:00AM for their dance classes. I was amazed that students would email the dance teacher if they were going to be late for class. Who does that in elementary school?"

The arts help students stay in school, increases motivation, encourages team building, enhances student creativity, improves attitudes and attendance, and improves academic performance.

Additionally, if you ask the Gideon staff they would tell you, the arts create the climate that improves teamwork among students and in academic language skills.

In summary, we cannot function and flourish with any budget cuts to our school and the arts cuts will be especially critical to our students.