

Friis, John

From: Alexis Zingale [alexiselizabethzingale@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, March 16, 2009 1:40 AM
To: Friis, John
Cc: eca_pace@yahoo.com
Subject: HB6666, Section 5

To Whom It May Concern,

I strongly advocate for Section 5 of House Bill HB6666, which will allow for adjunct faculty certificates to be issued to highly-trained professional artists serving as ECA's part-time faculty. Should this not be passed, the loss of the faculty at ECA will be an incalculable loss to the students and community of greater New Haven.

I stepped into teaching at ECA 2005 to cover a single class in basic music theory and composition for a friend on maternity leave, and it turned out to be an enjoyable and enlightening full-year position for me. The youngest member of my class is now a freshman at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University for his Bachelor of Applied Music in horn performance; the IU School of Music is one of the finest conservatories not only in the United States but the world, attracting an international student base, many of whom go on to major international careers. Others in the class went on to the New England Conservatory and UConn in performance and music education. I wish that I were able to keep up on all the achievements of my students in that class! Many of the students I have worked with past and present at Neighborhood Music School attended ECA, and they have been phenomenally successful; I think first of a violist attending the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University and performing in England this summer, and of a violinist attending Oberlin Conservatory as a double degree student in violin performance and in art history. Others have gone on to Juilliard, the Eastman School of Music, and many other top conservatories. They were all served very, very well by the ECA music program, from theory and composition classes, to music history, to large and small ensembles, and yet more besides. They were exposed to jazz, experimental and new classical music, electronic music, and the most advanced music theory from composers, performers and theorists with degrees from the finest conservatories in the world. All of this is, in fact, the necessary base for a student pursuing a professional degree in the arts; students without this base are unable to succeed in the rigorous program of specialized degrees without such training, and those that pursue a B.A. specializing in the arts are far better prepared than their peers and have much more successful college experiences for this educational base.

There is absolutely no other adequate outlet for the unique student wishing to pursue a specialized degree in fine arts and performance in the greater New Haven area unless the students and their families can afford and endure the immense costs of the same lessons in private, and even then, the dynamic environment of a classroom full of students in specialized arts education cannot be achieved in private lessons. As well, many students are not part of networks of arts professionals that can provide them the deeper experience they need, and these students therefore have no other opportunity for a deeper education in the arts; they do not know where or how to look for more experience. As an example: although the regular high school music classroom experience is an invaluable part of education, it is mostly one that applies towards the student eventually seeking a well-rounded liberal arts education, providing the students the opportunity to think and learn in different settings and structures, and hopefully seek out more material on their own, enjoying on a

level on which they could not without the well-rounded education. But the unique, exceptional student that wishes to study the arts more deeply, potentially pursuing a career in the arts, cannot be served by their regular high school music class. They've generally covered all the material on their own in their private lessons on their chosen instrument by the time they reach their high school music class, and there is no outlet or time for the student to be served at their level, yet if this is their only preparation for the rigorous environment of conservatory study, they will fail if they are even accepted to it. This sort of lowest common denominator education is much like taking a student who has already taken the Advanced Placement Calculus B/C exam and putting him in Basic Algebra and then expecting him to thrive.

Students seeking this specialized education must learn it from professionals active and successful in their chosen fields. The degrees leading to regular certified high school teaching are completely different than the ones leading to performance. There is a very great difference between degree programs in music education and music performance or composition or theory; music ed degree students rarely need to perform full-length recitals, chamber music, orchestra, and lessons worth six credits a semester with international performers, with the expectation that they enter competitions and perform at festivals and professional performances. Instead, they spend many, many hours in a completely disparate, rigorous program of lessons in their chosen instrument, "methods" classes where they learn the basics of all instruments, basic conducting, many classes on educational theory and practice, classes in general and special education, psychology, and even classes specific to their state requirements (for instance, state history). They undergo grueling classroom practicums and internships. Music education students are exceptionally well-prepared to teach in a classroom setting, and many often have performing careers as well. But they are generally not the concertmasters of symphonies, composers with international performance credits, or musicologists or theorists at the cutting edge of the study of music at major universities. This is not in any way meant to take away from the unbelievably valuable work that they do - they cannot, should not, and must not be replaced. But they do not have the time or classroom resources to deal with, for instance, a young pianist that has already performed as a soloist with professional orchestras. They have an entire classroom to manage, and they have to teach the whole class, not just the one wild-card student that walks in with Rachmaninov in his backpack and Beethoven on his iPod. These students need more for their study than just the classroom experience, and the artist faculty at ECA is the group able to give them this experience.

The other side of this equation is that the artist faculty at ECA are faculty there because they have no desire to teach the regular classroom experience and do not wish to be a part of regular high school education. The majority of their time is spent in their art, and not in the classroom. This does not, however, mean that they have no interest in teaching the specialized student - in fact, this is the only student they wish to teach, and they serve these students with unbelievable devotion and skill, and they have a range of expertise they can offer the students that the students cannot obtain in a regular high school music classroom. The ECA faculty members have no desire to replace classroom music teachers. If they are forced to get regular state teaching certification, they will tighten their belts, quit teaching at ECA and replace their income from some other source. Certification is very expensive, and most ECA faculty will actually be losing money by getting certification to teach there - the pay there is not terrific, and certification would cost more than teaching at ECA. The time commitment for teaching certification is enormous, and would eclipse the number of hours many ECA faculty spend there by far. The artist faculty at ECA are happy to share themselves, but not at the cost of their other work.

I am disgusted by the idea that my colleagues with achievements as varied as multiple graduate degrees from Yale, Fulbright scholarships, Javits fellowships and more would not be "qualified" to

teach in this special situation. I do not understand why the faculty are being run out of the school system where they teach at ECA out of a love for the subject and the students and look forward to the opportunity to share their art. The faculty there have no desire to infringe upon the students' experiences in their home high school classrooms; in fact, they hope to build and deepen their experiences. In turn, the students truly do not have anywhere else to go to have these experiences. I am disgusted that parents begging to pay the difference in tuition for what their home districts will not cover will not be allowed to do so. Although an ideal situation would be a program that all districts would pay for equally, having a program of any kind is still far, far better than having none. That ECA would be closed over an issue of equity to all would mean equity to none - not to the students, the parents, the home districts, or the faculty.

Requiring ECA faculty to receive state teaching certification to continue teaching there is ridiculous. If they are qualified to teach at universities, surely they are good enough to teach at a public school. Surely students in a rigorous college preparatory program geared towards specialized professional degrees in the arts deserve nothing less. Most of all, they deserve to have the program altogether. A failure to pass the bill allowing the ECA faculty to obtain special adjunct certification would result in the demise of one of the most valuable educational institutions in the state.

Sincerely,
Alexis Zingale
Piano faculty, staff accompanist, Neighborhood Music School