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Educational Center for the Arts
55 Audubon Street
New Haven, CT 06510

March 16, 2009

Good afternoon, Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education committee.

My name is Carolyn Ladd. I'm an actress and a teacher at ACES Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven, (ECA) a part-time arts high school serving 19 school districts. I've been acting for 26 years, teaching for 23, 8 at ECA, and I possess 3 masters' degrees. Today, I represent my colleagues at ECA, all practicing, professional artists, all with similar credentials, and all teaching at ECA 12 hours a week or less.

We strongly support Raised Bill 6666, section 5, authorizing an adjunct instructor certificate that allows professional artists to teach in Connecticut's part-time, magnet arts high schools.

ECA's mission is to provide gifted students with accelerated instruction under the mentorship of professional artists. We pass on to our students the

same intensive training that we received in our masters and doctoral programs, and we provide up-to-date, first-hand knowledge of what it takes to be successful in our competitive careers. Our expertise is the bedrock of an ECA education.

Our distinguished alumni include:

- LAUREN AMBROSE -nominated twice for a Best Actress Emmy Award for her role in HBO's *Six Feet Under*

- JON BRION, composer for Academy Award-winning films

- Ryan Kelly and Ray Sullivan, cast members of Broadway's *Wicked and Cats*

- And Ben Allison, composer for NPR's *On the Media*.

There is a misconception that all students enter ECA with a record of achievement. In fact, many arrive with a history of educational struggle. They achieve at ECA because their artistic gifts are finally nurtured. Without ECA, countless students would never discover the capacity for a career.

My colleagues and I—screenwriters, choreographers, sculptors, opera singers, actors, jazz musicians, and

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set-designers, all recognized in our fields, teach at ECA - on an almost voluntary basis - because we thrive on helping students become artists. With an adjunct instructor certificate, professional artists could continue to teach at ECA. Without it, the school would find few individuals who are willing to work in a part-time program with no benefits who are both certified teachers and professional artists. Thus, an exemplary program like ECA would be deprived of its faculty and the school would close.

On behalf of our students and the mission of ECA, my colleagues and I urge your support of the adjunct instructor certificate.

Thank you.

Featured Article

Certification Requirements Put Art Magnet Schools At Risk

BY:

Marie Kuhn Published: 01/15/2009

<http://www.cpbm.org/article/certification-requirements-put-art-magnet-schools-risk>

Connecticut's Department of Education is requiring that all public school teachers become certified. That includes art professionals who teach at state magnet schools. WNPR's Marie Kuhn reports these dancers, musicians and artists warn that these requirements could threaten the future of the schools.



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ECA students prepare for class. Photo by Marie Kuhn.

New Haven's Educational Center for the Arts, or ECA is a part-time regional arts magnet school. Kids take their academics in the morning at their regular schools, then go to ECA in the afternoon to study dance, theater, music, visual arts and creative writing.

Parent Leslie Redmond, a certified teacher herself, says teachers at ECA offer students more than knowledge and training. They offer understanding of the artistic temperament.

"A lot of these kids I think, probably feel like they don't quite fit in in their regular high school, and this is their salvation, ok, I'll take my chemistry, I'll take my math class, I'll take my biology, but then, I get to go perform, or dance, or sing or do what I'm so passionate about."

Getting into the program is competitive. Once accepted, students work with professionals in their fields -- jazz musicians, comedy writers, poets, painters, choreographers, theater directors, and orchestra conductors.

Roy Wiseman has been teaching at ECA for almost 20 years. He plays double bass and leads professional ensembles. He's also the orchestra conductor at Wesleyan University.

"I probably wouldn't be here if I were required to be certified. I mean, I'm already teaching at the college level, and I probably wouldn't pursue that. It's not really relevant to what I do."

And going through the certification process can be expensive, costing up to \$9,000. ECA's part time teachers are paid hourly wages with no benefits, even though most hold masters of fine arts degrees, and even doctorates.



ECA Director Alice Schilling. Photo by Marie Kuhn

Alice Schilling is the director at ECA. She worries that non-certified faculty will opt to leave rather than go through the process. And she says getting certified teachers to work part-time will be challenging.

"If you're certified in the state to teach pre-K to 12 in say... visual arts, you're not going to teach at ECA one day a week. You're going to look for a full-time position in another school system."

ECA is not alone. Other arts magnet programs -- in Trumbull, New London and Hartford -- face the same dilemma.

These regional magnet schools have been viewed as an important piece of the state's response to the Sheff vs. O'Neill desegregation ruling. They've done a good job

addressing the racial isolation of urban school districts by successfully attracting suburban kids into cities. ECA alone attracts students from 23 different districts.

Education officials say ECA's program will only be strengthened by the state and federal teacher certification requirements. And they say... rules are rules. Schools that receive state and federal dollars will have to comply with the requirements.

Spokesman Tom Murphy:

"The state of Connecticut, and federal law under No Child Left Behind require that all public school teachers hold a state license, a license to teach, which involves not only content knowledge, knowing math, science, ect -- but also having a preparation in pedagogy -- an ability to instruct."

Murphy says being a professional artist doesn't necessarily make you a good teacher, and he says Connecticut offers special programs to help artists become certified.

"What it does provide is a life-time certification as a public school teacher, and access to appropriate pay, benefits, and retirement. Today, these part time teachers don't have access to those things."



ECA music teacher Roy Wiseman. Photo by Marie Kuhn

But many on the ECA faculty say they would not teach full-time because they work full-time in their artistic fields.

Music teacher Roy Wiseman says ECA's strength is that students get direct access to professional artists.

"The way ECA is set up is it's really in effect a college level program, and you know, kids have to come up to that standard. I think they learn some things from working with me that they might not with somebody else with a different experience."

Part-time arts magnet schools in Hartford and New London are transitioning into full-time programs. But it wouldn't be cost-effective for ECA to become full-time. Regional arts magnet schools are hoping the state will offer a more flexible position on certification requirements.

Currently, teachers have until 2014 to complete the certification process.

Related Links:

WNPR's *Where We Live*: What do We Mean by "Qualified" Teachers?

ACES

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Submitted by Peg Sullivan (not verified) on January 16, 2009 - 2:39pm.

My name is Peg Sullivan and I am a parent of a junior at the Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven, as well as being an alumni of ECA. I can acknowledge firsthand how important the program is for my son, as well as the enormously positive influence ECA had in my own preparation for college and my career as a digital graphic artist.

As an ECA student, I was privileged to have professional, practicing artists as teachers and benefited enormously from the experience, with exposure during high school to college-level instructors involved in the local art scene. That exposure made my high school experience unique, and is the crux of ECA's mission, which continues today for my son, a student in the Music Department. The qualifications of the instructors at ECA today in both their education, professional accomplishments and courses they teach at area colleges should be taken into account. We are fortunate they have chosen to support ECA's Mission and everything possible should be done to retain them.

The State's present argument that it is unjustified to refuse to become certified—and that enough time is presently allowed to do so—is unreasonable and an unnecessarily narrow interpretation of the current policy. Placing many successful magnet programs in jeopardy by mandating across-the-board certification, without looking at their unique nature and benefits, short-changes our children's potential. Surely we can do better for our children and their future success than to force proven, alternative programs out of existence.

Magnet programs like ECA's meet Connecticut's own Framework for High School Redesign for providing "authentic experience, up-to-date career preparation and programs that nurture the potential of each and every child" in an incredibly unique and successful manner, and should be protected and encouraged to thrive.

It seems obvious a distinction in policy should be made between mandated certification for multi-discipline or special needs professionals and highly-specialized, magnet school professionals, such as ours at the Educational Center for the Arts. I hope the State will consider that distinction and work toward a positive outcome.

• reply

Learning at ECA

Submitted by Raymond A. Arnold (not verified) on January 15, 2009 - 9:43pm.

I am currently a student in the Theatre Department at ECA. This issue is naturally of vital importance to me. The atmosphere, teachers, and level of work at ECA are quite different than what is offered at other venues. ECA is based on the idea of the teaching artist, a person who is heavily qualified and passionate in their artwork, communicating this skill to devoted students. At ECA, I receive college level training. Rather than in

most schools, where the emphasis is often on the performance, the piece of art, the recital, the concert, at ECA we focus on process and technique. This emphasis is only attained if we are taught by those who have worked in these fields, and put these techniques into practice for many years.

Spokesman Murphy makes an interesting argument. However, I have a different understanding of No Child Left Behind. According to what I know of it, it says that teachers must be highly qualified. That is all. This is by no means a mandate for certified, licensed teachers. It is open to interpretation. The State has interpreted it as so, and can interpret further. Spokesman Murphy also argues that a professional artist is not always a qualified teacher. I must answer that with the fact that a professional teacher is not always a qualified artist. There are some who are, no question, but some who are not. To think that those who are not would be given preference over those who are highly skilled artists is detrimental to the school, and to the community at large. Knowledge of the art and the ability to teach it is not the same as being highly qualified. Passion for the art and extensive training in it, and it solely, is, and should be, the definition of highly qualified.

The Education Center for the Arts is an amazing program. It combines students with tremendous passion and talent with teachers who care about them and are extensively trained in their art. If anyone is concerned with whether the students are learning, I invite them to any one of our performances, sharings, or gallery opens. They will be amazed by my peer's work. This is not a simple testament to my peers, but to my teachers, and all teachers at ECA. Because of their work, tremendous learning is going on. Is this not what education is all about? One would think that a high school program producing this level of work and skill would be a state treasure. Why is it not considered so when writing legislature?

- reply

My name is Laura

Submitted by Laura Mesite (not verified) on January 15, 2009 - 6:41pm.

My name is Laura Mesite. I graduated from ECA's music department in 2007, and I'm currently a music performance/ cognitive science dual degree student at the University of Connecticut.

After two years of taking as many music classes as I could at my local high school, I decided to audition for ECA in hopes that I could be better prepared for attending college as a music major. My local high school offered a number of ensembles at the time, but the music was not challenging in order to accommodate all playing levels, and very few music theory/history classes were offered.

The music department at ECA offers a wider variety of more challenging ensembles, theory classes that go beyond high school level theory, compositional classes that instruct the students in the use of musical notation software, performances by visiting professional musicians, compulsory writing assignments as well as theory/

composition homework to tie in academic subject matter with music, and electives in which students can experience another art form. Clearly this is much more than most local music departments offer.

Choosing to attend ECA was hands down the best decision I've ever made. I was so well prepared for college that I was able to skip levels of ear training and theory, and I'm receiving straight A's. I know that if it weren't for my theory training from ECA, I would be struggling with theory as the majority of my UConn classmates have been. Not only did the theory classes prepare me well, but the musical software instruction in my composition classes has really put me ahead of my fellow students as well.

The variety and caliber of ensembles at ECA definitely gave me a head start as well. I was able to skip playing in band altogether and started in Wind Ensemble and Orchestra at UConn. The other horn players in the section are always surprised by my knowledge of repertoire and by how easily orchestral playing comes to me. It wasn't always easy considering, like most students, my local school did not have a symphony orchestra, but ECA came to the rescue once again and provided me with that experience. Many of my fellow students had not played in chamber groups in high school, but my experience in brass and woodwind quintets at ECA put me ahead of my fellow students once again.

Attending ECA really helped me become more independent and outgoing. I used to be withdrawn and shy, but by the end of my first year I had opened up quite a bit. Everyone at my high school had grown up together and were pretty similar. At ECA I had to re-learn how to make new friends and was exposed to many different types of people rather than the homogenous students from my local high school. The diverse group of students coupled with the cultural electives offered, really opened my mind like never before. I learned sign language, hip hop, circus arts, Chinese folk dance, and Salsa dancing in just two years! I can't tell you how often the ASL comes in handy as a cognitive science major, and the dance and circus classes provided me with cultural knowledge that I take with me as well. The college-like class schedule and high-class expectations coupled with meeting new, different types of people really helped bridge the gap between high-school and college like no other schools can.

The teachers are the heart of ECA. I go to school right along side future music teachers at one of the top-ranked education schools in the country. I know they're capabilities. I believe that such certified teachers are qualified to teach music to students who are not planning to make music a profession, but I feel that they lack experience which is key to teaching future musicians. This is why these teachers with years and years of experience with performing, teaching, networking, and masters and doctorate degrees from top-notch schools (at least four of the ECA music dept. staff went to Yale) should remain at ECA and other schools designed to train artists who want to become professionals.

There is enough socioeconomic inequality already. If these teachers are removed from public schools, then a number of them will most certainly teach at private schools. Private school students already have an advantage in that they have money and

prestige. If they are the only ones allowed to have such great teachers, then it will make it even harder for public school students to succeed.

As far as I'm concerned, years and years of teaching/ performing experience, a Doctorate from Yale, and a job as a professor at a top-ranked private university trumps a newly graduated certified teacher any day.

WNPR - Connecticut Public Radio



What do we mean by "qualified" teachers?

BY:

John Dankosky *Published: 01/15/2009*

The state's plan to have all teachers certified by 2014 raised a lot of interest on the phone, and online today. The key objections:

- Does this jeopardize current specialized instruction from "special education" teachers?
- How do we allow part-time arts instructors to continue to teach in magnet schools?
- Why won't the state wait for the new administration to make changes to NCLB before embarking on big certification changes?

Many others were addressed on-air by Education Commissioner Mark McQuillan. A lot of the thoughts that came in online during the last day dealt with the New Haven magnet school ECA, profiled here by WNPR's Marie Kuhn.

From Noah Baerman: *The world of jazz training has always operated largely on an apprenticeship system, whereby skilled and experienced practitioners communicate their wisdom in a hands-on manner to the up-and-comers. To have access to that as a high school student is not only a gift, but it is in most cases a necessity for those who*

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aspire to professional viability. I needed a mentor who was having real-life experiences in the field to show me the things for which I needed to be prepared in the "real world," not one who put those pursuits on hold in order to go about becoming certified.

From Lady McCrady: Most children in the arts succeed academically because they have a richer cultural understanding, a more rounded view. My daughter at ECA loves academics at her high school. But her participation in the dramatic arts at ECA New Haven defines who she is, encourages her to express her unique point of view.

From Margot Schlipp: I am deeply concerned about the certification requirements that seem to be coming, because I love ECA's students who are driven, extremely talented, and amazing. I want to continue teaching at ECA, but there is no way I could choose to get certified, even using the Alternate Route to Certification (ARC). I could see that it would be an option if I wanted a full-time position as a teacher in a high school, but for me, someone who wants to continue in my profession as a writer and a college teacher (I have two master's degrees in English), it would be too costly, and I would have to give up ECA in order to take on additional classes at area colleges.

From Penny: I fear that we are certifying to the extreme and that we are trying to make everyone and every class exactly alike. The fact is the magnet school specifically work with gifted and talented children. Those part-time teachers are asked to GIVE their skills and knowledge to 'special' kids who have honestly been ignored over the past ten years for the 'special students' who need extra help. This is just one more obstacle to helping to motivate students who are bored in the regular classroom because we are teaching to the lowest and letting that population dominate our thinking about education. There should be different kinds of certification and these teachers should be guest artists in the schools under a separate certification.

From Arnie Sabatelli (who also called the show): What Mr. McQuillan doesn't seem to understand is that it's not that we're simply saying "no, we won't do it, and we want a special exclusion from what other public school teachers are required to do..." Rather, we are saying we can't do it. We all spend a considerable amount of time as practicing professional artists in our careers, and mos of us also teach at the college level and design classes at ECA under the college seminar paradigm. 1. We simply don't have time to take from 20-30 credit hours more given our very busy schedules--piecing together a range of part-time teaching assignments to assist us financially as we pursue our art as professionals. 2. We couldn't afford it. ECA pays us for 10hrs./week at a very modest hourly rate, and we receive no benefits. The cost of getting certified would roughly equal 1/3 to 1/2 of a year's salary.

From Christopher Udry: The part-time arts teachers at ECA fall somewhere in the middle of this range, and thus the appropriateness of certification should at least be open to question. It is clear that the cost of certification is extremely high relative to the part-time pay of these instructors. And the benefit would be relatively low, because the philosophy of ECA is to create professional mentoring relationships between the faculty and students. This is a very different interaction than is typical in a high school classroom. And in order to succeed in this kind of mentoring, these professional artists have built their qualifications through a different path. On balance, a certification requirement threatens the very foundation of ECA: its ability to attract dynamic, skilled professional artists to work part-time with highly motivated student-artists. I would

imagine that similar considerations would come into play at other arts magnet programs in the state, and for other kinds of vocational and professional education.

Since starting my studies at ECA as a Sophomore, I have undergone so many changes that have really shaped who I am today and who I hope to become. I have become more confident, more creative, and more capable as a musician. Furthermore, I have been greatly inspired to work toward a future career in music composition. This is because of the very nature of the program and in large part because of the teachers. They are all perfect for the job because as professional musicians themselves, they are able to give us the tools we need to ultimately fill their shoes in the future: tricks of the trade, professionalism, musicianship. It is clear that these teachers are great at what they do-- just look at the results. Graduating seniors go on to become vital members of the musical community, and cutting off these capable students from the mentorship they need would be a shame, and a waste of their incredible potential. There is literally no school like ECA.

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Hello!

It has come to my attention that there is a possibility that all teaching artists at ECA would have to be certified teachers. I am a graduate of ECA, 2004, dance department.

I believe that requiring these valuable artists to be certified teachers would be detrimental to the education of the students at ECA. I had a most amazing experience and education at ECA and it is because the educators are artists, first and foremost.

Their artistic insight and experience is what makes an education at ECA fulfilling and valuable. Their individual career paths may not have led them to a teaching certification but that does not discount the value of their knowledge. Please consider this when making such an important decision.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

-Julianne D'Iorio

2004 dance department graduate

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