Friis, John

From: Rachel Kobasa [rachel.kobasa@gmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, March 14, 2009 12:25 AM
To: Friis, John
Subject: The Importance of the Educational Center for the Arts

Dear Mr. Friis,

It has come to my attention that votes are happening in the General Assembly regarding issues pertinent to ACES/Educational Center for the Arts. This is extremely frustrating and hard to hear. To even think to pass votes that would hinder the effect of ECA as an institution of learning is horrendous! I attended ECA for four years in the theatre department and it was one of the most shaping and powerful experiences I have had. The teachers not only taught me in depth about the world of theatre, from playwriting to acting methods to puppetry, but also shared their own experience of the world. I participated in numerous theatre for social change classes where we connected to the community around us and wrote pieces pertinent to current social issues such as immigration and the elderly. And theatre wasn't the only thing that made up my world at ECA. Electives expanded my learning scope to include film studies, circus arts, West African dance, and film noir writing among others.

The teachers of each and every class I took were knowledgeable about a myriad of things, quite often moreso that oficially "certified" teachers. They are each so dedicated to sharing their art with their students that any way in which they could further our learning they took. There was never a feeling that there were statistics they had to fill or quotas they had to make, as the school system has unfortunately been pushing. Instead, each student is appreciated as an individual and respected as a person instead of a number. The teachers are there for you constantly and have been pillars of support for me and all of my classmates through good times and times when help is very much needed. It was the great power of one teacher's recommendation that pushed me to get the internship I am in currently at a prestigious contemporary arts museum, working in performing arts administration. These teachers are the people who shaped me, taught me how to push the envelope and take risks. Nothing in any certification class could have taught them how to do that, how to teach the lessons most valuable to me.

I am constantly at a loss as to why arts are tread upon and squashed under the heel of this government. The arts are so important, particularly to growing individuals. They can touch people in ways nothing else can, and can be used as methods of healing and learning more effectively than any social studies or english class. By providing a comprehensive arts education, ECA has contributed to the well-being and advancement of many a student - inspired to go out and use their knowledge in the world whether by continuing in the arts or in another venue. Any vote that would try to standardize ECA or place it on the level of a quota driven school guided by the outrageous requirements outlined in the No Child Left Behind Act is a vote I strongly oppose and hope you do as well. No Child Left Behind does nothing but leave children behind, and if there aren't more instiutions like the Educational Center for the Arts where those children can be picked up, every generation, the young and the old, will certainly feel that loss.

Please consider how important this school has been to me and many, many others.

Sincerely,
Rachel B. Kobasa, proud graduate of the Educational Center for the Arts