



Press Release

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THE KENNEDY CENTER ALLIANCE FOR ARTS EDUCATION NETWORK AND NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCE RECIPIENT OF THE 2007 AWARD

Niles Township High School District 219 Board of Education Skokie, Illinois

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts today announced that Niles Township High School District 219, Skokie, Illinois has been chosen to receive the 19th annual Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network (KCAAEN) and National School Boards Association (NSBA) Award. This district was singled out for its outstanding support of high-quality arts education. School boards were nominated by KCAAEN State Alliances for Arts Education and state school board associations.

The award will be presented on April 17, 2007 at the National School Boards Association's annual conference in San Francisco, California. Since 1989, this prestigious award has nationally recognized 38 school boards in 23 states for their support of arts education.

A national review panel is convened to select the school district that receives the honor each year. School districts selected for this national honor must demonstrate support for all four artistic disciplines in their arts education program including visual arts, music, theater and dance. Instruction and programming must also be available for all students throughout the district. The ways in which the school district develops collaborative partnerships with the cultural resources available in the community is also an important consideration in reviewing nominations.

NILES TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 219, SKOKIE, ILLINOIS

As demonstrated by a distinct emphasis on the arts within the curriculum, high student involvement and achievement, strong parent involvement and quality teaching and support staff, Niles Township High School District 219 has proven a commitment to exceptional arts education in its community. District 219 has a student population of approximately 4,800 in two high schools, Niles North and Niles West. The schools serve the communities of Skokie, Lincolnwood, Morton Grove and Niles.

The Niles Township Board of Education has a Fine Arts budget that is 4.53% of their annual instructional budget, higher than most Boards of Education nationwide. The Board has provided additional support for national and international cultural field trips and an allocation of over \$250,000 towards new Fine Arts resources. District 219's long-range plan resulted in appointing a dedicated Fine Arts Director. Between 2001 and 2003 the District completed reconstruction of the arts facilities, including the construction of two state-of-the-art black box theaters. In addition, the Board strives to make all of these growing opportunities available to every student by implementing programs to assist with arts fees, instrument lending and recently establishing an Alumni Giving Back program.

District 219's arts education programs are distinguished by a number of classes and opportunities. Making full use of the new black box theaters the students learn how to execute all aspects of a production. The students also act as the in-house crew for local community organizations that rent the space. The District videotapes all performances for broadcasting on their local television channel, providing a hands-on experience for those students in broadcast communications. Students also have access to professional artists in wide-ranging fields through numerous artist-in-residence programs. Recent residency artists include kabuki performers, muralists, a capella singers, playwrights, choreographers and composers.

As a result, the arts programs within the District have received recognition from notable professional organizations. Niles North High School's music program has been honored three times with the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences' (NARAS') designation as a Grammy Signature School. District 219's theater programs have been invited twice by the American High School Theatre Festival to perform at the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland. Drama and music students are routinely chosen to participate in their respective All-State festivals. Numerous teachers have received teacher of the year honors within their disciplines. Works produced by visual art students have frequently been selected to represent high profile organizations.

Outside the realm of honors and recognition, students are also taught the importance the arts play in their growth socially and communally. District 219 has established a strong commitment to reach out and promote the fine and performing arts as a way to build a better, more connected community. Free public performances within the various departments of drama, dance, music and visual arts are frequently held. Students regularly work with the local senior centers and community groups on a variety of arts-based projects.

Arts education is not an area that is taken for granted in this community. A commitment to the arts makes Niles Township High School District 219 Board of Education a model for arts education in Illinois and throughout the country.

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THE KENNEDY CENTER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

For more than 30 years, the Kennedy Center Education Department has provided quality arts experiences through performances, residencies, workshops, conferences, career development programs, symposia, and on-line and print resources. In the past year, the Center's education programs have directly impacted more than 11 million people across the nation. The mission of the Education Department is to foster understanding of and participation in the performing arts through exemplary programs and performances for diverse populations of all ages that represent the unique cultural life and heritage of the United States. For more information, visit the Center's web site at www.kennedy-center.org/education.

KENNEDY CENTER ALLIANCE FOR ARTS EDUCATION NETWORK

The Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network (KCAAEN) is a coalition of statewide, non-profit organizations working in partnership with the Kennedy Center to support policies, practices, and partnerships to ensure that the arts are a critical and essential part of American education. The KCAAEN is a component of the Kennedy Center Education Department.

NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1940, NSBA is a not-for-profit federation of associations of school boards across the United States. NSBA represents the nation's 95,000 school board members that govern 14,890 local school districts serving the nation's more than 47 million public school students. Virtually all school board members are elected, the rest are appointed by elected officials.

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