

# The Kennedy Center

THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS



## Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**April 6, 2009**

### **THE KENNEDY CENTER ANNOUNCES THE RECIPIENT OF 21<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL AWARD RECOGNIZING OUTSTANDING SCHOOL BOARD SUPPORT OF THE ARTS**

#### **Polk County Public Schools Board of Education Bartow, Florida**

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts today announced that the Polk County Public Schools, Bartow, Florida has been chosen to receive the 21<sup>st</sup> annual Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network (KCAAEN) and National School Boards Association (NSBA) Award. This district was singled out from nominees around the country, for their 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 and \$10,000 prize will be presented on April 6, 2009 at the National School Boards Association's annual conference in San Diego, California. Since 1989, this prestigious award has nationally recognized a school board 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.

#### **POLK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, BARTOW, FLORIDA**

The School Board of Polk County is committed to providing arts education for every student, even during times of economic stress. Polk County is the eighth largest school district in Florida with a student population of 94,471 in elementary, middle and high schools. There are arts programs in all schools as well as three performing and visual arts focused K-8 schools, one Fine Arts Academy at McLaughlin Middle School and Harrison School for the Arts at the high school level.

The Board has consistently proved its support of the arts by making the financial and administrative commitments needed for a strong arts education program throughout all grade levels. They have committed 4.3% of the instructional budget for arts programs and support a Senior Director of Fine Arts, Senior Coordinator of Fine Arts, a K -12 Music Resource Specialist, a Fine Arts Academy Coordinator and 363 fulltime arts teachers. The School Board has a collaborative relationship with community arts organizations, such as The Polk Museum of Art, The Lakeland Theatre, The Opera Theatre of Lakeland and the Imperial Symphony Orchestra. The School Board of Polk County members also sit on various other boards, as well as hold staff positions of fine arts institutions.

Per School Board policy, all elementary school students are to receive 45 minutes of instruction per week of visual arts and music. Along with arts specific instruction, Polk County Schools provides arts integration and arts infusion training for five Kindergarten through Middle School programs with plans to expand this effort in the future. There are 47,145 students enrolled in secondary schools, with 37,444 students participating in arts classes. Some students take more than one arts course.

The School Board of Polk County truly believes in giving every student the opportunity to experience the arts. To make sure that all students, regardless of economic status, can participate in the arts, the Board has allocated an extra \$2 per elementary and middle school student for arts materials in addition to funds already appropriated for arts equipment. To help secondary school students that cannot afford the approved arts fees for high schools, the Board waives fees or provides scholarships. Along with equitable access to the arts, the School Board of Polk County feels it is important to assess student learning in the arts. One of the ways in which this is achieved is through the County's Essential Criteria, a list developed by teachers, of skills and knowledge that each student should master upon completing their arts courses. To be able to create the Essential Criteria, teach high quality arts and incorporate the arts into other subjects both arts and academic teachers gain professional development through various outlets including in-services, mentoring and summer institutes.

The Board's commitment to the arts has truly made them a model for arts education in Florida and throughout the country.

### **THE KENNEDY CENTER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

As the nation's performing arts center, the Kennedy Center's impact and responsibility extends far beyond its doors—it reaches across America and into the future. Nowhere is this goal more truly achieved than in the Center's education programs. For more than 35 years, the Kennedy Center Education Department has provided quality arts experiences for students, teachers, families, and the general public throughout the United States. In the past year, the Center's education programs have directly impacted more than 11 million people. 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](http://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, the National School Boards Association is a not-for-profit federation of state associations of school boards representing 95,000 local school board members throughout the United States. Its mission is to foster excellence and equity in public elementary and secondary education through local school board leadership. NSBA represents the school board perspective in working with federal government agencies and national organizations that impact education, and provides vital information and services to state associations of school boards throughout the nation.

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