

Thank you for giving me the time to speak. I am on the performing arts faculty and am the director of theater at U-32 Middle and High School. I have been teaching theater for 17 years and have worked in 4 different schools in Vermont as well as served on committees with the Agency of Education and the Vermont Drama Council. I am here to advocate for all of the arts, but will speak specifically about theater education since that is my specialty and since theater is so often considered an extra curricular.

I am fortunate enough to teach in a school that values and funds the arts. Because of the strength of our program, and support from the community, theater students at U-32 have had many great experiences including: traveling to Edinburgh, Scotland to perform in the Fringe Festival with an original play about the Vermont foster care system, a wonderful life experience and a great example of the power of theater to tell important stories and start difficult but necessary conversations. I have copies of the recording of our play "Baggage" if you are interested. My students also recently travelled to New York City to see "Hamilton" and take workshops with members of the cast and artistic crew.

Taking acting and theater tech classes, putting on high quality productions, working with playwrights, traveling and having master classes with professionals are life changing experiences for young artists and are only possible in a school where the arts curriculum and arts

faculty are valued and supported. Every student in Vermont should have access to a variety of high quality arts programs. The arts should never be “extra.” Too often theater is an after school **only** activity and is lead by volunteers, teachers without a theater license or parents. As well meaning as this may be, I strongly believe that all arts classes, including theater, should be standards based (especially since we now have the National Core Standards for the Arts), should be part of the school day curriculum and taught by licensed teachers. Theater is by its very nature project based, proficiency based, builds transferable skills, encompasses all arts forms and is able to reach students from all backgrounds, especially those from underserved and vulnerable populations. I have encountered theater programs across the state with little to no funding, no theater classes offered during the school day and no opportunities for field trips. Can you imagine a music or visual arts program treated this way? Or, how about a science or social studies curriculum taught by a non-licensed teacher or parent volunteer?

The arts give us our culture and our soul. Children learn through play and creativity but all too often, arts programs are cut when budgets are tight. In this changing world with economic and community uncertainty, what are we willing to sacrifice? Massive budget cuts and level finding will definitely result in cutting the arts - the very life force for so many young people - from many of our schools. I hope you will take this into consideration as you think about

school funding and the priority of arts and licensed arts teachers in the schools. Thank you for your time.