

For Release

Thursday, October 18, 2012

Media Contact

Van Schoales, CEO, A+ Denver
(303) 725-1151 van@aplusdenver.org



A+ Denver taskforce calls on community to step up arts education for kids

Bond election offers opportunity to re-envision arts education in DPS

Denver - A+ Denver, an advocacy group that has historically focused on student achievement in Denver Public Schools turned its attention to arts education in a report released today.

“Given the upcoming bond election that could potentially put \$11 million additional dollars into school art programs, we wanted to take a hard look at what those funds could accomplish,” said Van Schoales, CEO of A+ Denver. “This report is really just the beginning of a process to build an arts education vision for Denver.”

The report says the disparity of arts education from school to school is too large and that troubling arts deserts persist in some of Denver’s poorest neighborhoods.

“We can and should create a place where a child born into poverty can matriculate through our public school system and become an accomplished pianist or dancer or painter by the time she graduates high school, without paying thousands of dollars for private lessons and arts summer camps,” said Schoales. “Right now, becoming artistically accomplished is largely a privilege of the wealthy. We don’t think that’s fair, and we think it’s something we can change. Denver has one of the richest ecosystems of cultural and artistic institutions in the region. We can do a much better job of connecting kids to museums, professional artists, internship opportunities, theater companies and other arts organizations and opportunities across the city.”

The taskforce recommends nine key strategies that it believes will make a powerful impact on the current arts education system:

1. Create a multi-year strategic plan
2. Assess student performance
3. Extend learning opportunities
4. Increase and expand strategic partnerships
5. Focus on depth instead of breadth
6. Call on schools to define clear approach to the arts
7. Improve communication about school programs
8. Increase accountability for arts dollars
9. Increase funding and resources

The report suggests that Colorado’s students and economy both stand to benefit by a more deliberate and strategic approach to arts education. It points out that Colorado’s creative sector is now the 5th largest in the state, and yet we import much of our talent from other places – underscoring the need to do a better job preparing students to compete in the creative sector.

The mission of A+ Denver (A+) is to harness the power of Denver’s civic leadership to build public will and advocate for the changes necessary to dramatically increase student achievement in public education in Denver. For more information, visit us at: <http://www.aplusdenver.org/about>.

###