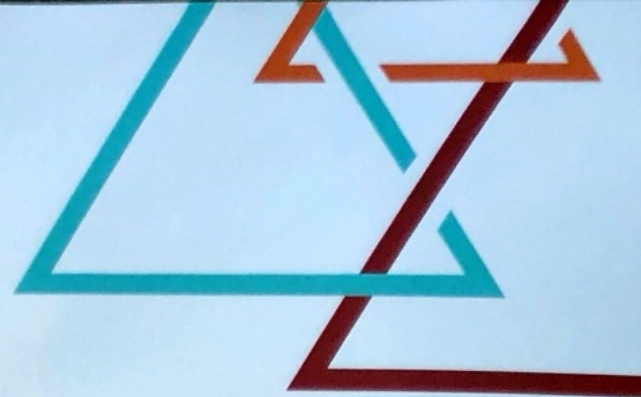


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February 24, 2021



Secretary Tiffany Sanderson  
South Dakota Department of Education  
800 Governors Drive  
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Secretary Sanderson,

Greetings from Arts South Dakota, our state's arts advocacy and service organization. I am writing to introduce myself and the work of Arts South Dakota. We serve the arts sector across South Dakota through various networking, professional development, and awareness programs. We also advocate for the arts with policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels.

We know clearly that creative thinking skills are the foundation of our 21st-century workforce. Creative problem solving ranks high on the list of top qualifications for employment and cultivating creative thinking starts with arts education.

In early childhood, the arts can boost IQ. As young people move toward adolescence, participating in arts programs shows significant improvement in conflict resolution, enhances critical thinking skills and equates to better performance in school. Arts participation also correlates with higher rates of tolerance and lower rates of juvenile delinquency and truancy.

One critical Arts South Dakota program is the annual Arts Education Institute, which offers a fun-filled week of learning to infuse the arts into classrooms and curriculum development. We work in partnership with Northern State University and the South Dakota Arts Council. Recently we added two music-specific elements to the annual institute: the Band Directors Institute and the Choral Directors Institute. We are committed to providing South Dakota arts educators with exceptional CE programs right here at home.

South Dakota has a long and excellent tradition of arts education. Think Oscar Howe and his legacy of arts education, or Carl "Christy" Christenson, the longtime and esteemed music educator at South Dakota State University. That work continues today in small, consolidated schools and the largest districts of Sioux Falls and Rapid City. Our students, myself once included, receive the best and most well-rounded education possible because of excellent art inclusion. We hope to see the DOE remain committed to arts education in all South Dakota schools.

Living in South Dakota allows us to work together across sectors, areas of discipline, and government branches on a level not often found in more populated states. It doesn't take long to discover a shared connection, and Arts South Dakota strives to be a connecting point for all things arts, so please count on us if we can assist your work. Thank you for your service to our state's teachers and students. Please reach out to me anytime we can be of assistance, and if your time allows, we invite you to join us at the 2021 Arts Education Institute in July.

Best Regards,

Jim Speers  
Executive Director

