For Immediate Release
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HOUSTON ISD AND ARTS ACCESS INITIATIVE
TAKE ACTION TO INCREASE ARTS IN SCHOOLS

Innovative partnership between district and community will guarantee equity of arts access to all of Houston ISD’s kids

Houston, TX--Houston ISD announced its commitment to the Arts Access Initiative, Houston’s community-developed action plan to ensure equity of access to arts and arts education for all K-8 students in the district. This innovative partnership will eventually engage all of the over 200 schools serving grades K-8 in Houston ISD, and the 2015-2016 school year will launch 10 elementary schools and one middle school into the in-depth arts partnership and leadership development program. For a full report on the Arts Access Initiative’s research and strategy so far, visit www.artsaccessinitiative.org

"There is no separation between academics and artistic learning," said Dan Gohl, HISD's Special Assistant to the Superintendent. "We want to make sure our students' lives are not filled with standardized testing, reports, or just homework. In order for them to achieve greatness, our students must learn and create."
HISD's efforts over the past year, working through the Arts Access Initiative in partnership with a broad sector of stakeholders across Houston, including the City of Houston, businesses, the philanthropic sector, arts and cultural organizations, and higher education leaders, has elevated awareness of the importance of arts education in our schools. Houston ISD's Innovative Curriculum and Instruction Department leads the effort throughout the school district and Young Audiences of Houston serves as the community backbone organization and fiscal agent of the initiative.

The Arts Access Initiative's vision is that all children should have the opportunity to benefit cognitively, creatively, emotionally, and academically through the arts, and the initiative commits to goals of equity, impact, and sustainability. The first part of the implementation is funded through a three-year $370,000 grant from the Houston Endowment, with additional critical support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the national office of Young Audiences.

As a result of the Initiative, AAI stakeholders expect to improve student engagement and attendance and foster the development of critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration, drawing on the power of the arts to inspire and equip Houston's children to become life-long learners and the creative global citizens of tomorrow.

To launch the Initiative in the 2015 - 2016 school year, the Arts Access Initiative will connect 11 Houston ISD K - 8 schools with creative learning partnership opportunities through the city's outstanding arts education organizations, providing 7,000 students creative learning experiences in and out of the classroom. Each implementation school, through principal leadership development, teacher professional development, and long-term community partnerships, will become a place where the arts are vibrant and valued.
The program will begin this fall at Atherton, Benbrook, Eliot, Hartsfield, Hines-Caldwell, Kashmere Gardens, Memorial, Mitchell, Scarborough, and Whittier elementary schools, as well as Hamilton Middle School.

In subsequent years, additional cohorts of campuses will be added until the reach of this initiative extends throughout HISD to all campuses serving grades K - 8. For this first implementation year, AAI issued a district-wide open call for applications for participation, and pilot campuses were selected from the numerous applicants based on a lottery system.

**Each of the selected campuses has committed to the following:**

- Investment of leadership, time, and funding
- Commitment to include elements of the Arts Access Initiative in their School Improvement Plan
- Attendance at twice yearly Arts Leadership Circle Meetings to discuss best practices and challenges with other principals and arts education experts
- Commitment for all teachers to receive arts-based professional development
- Commitment to partner with Community Arts Partners to offer a range of arts-programming experiences

**These selected campuses will receive:**

- Campus-based needs assessment
- In-school and after-school arts residencies and workshops
- Live arts experiences
- Advocacy on the school and district's behalf concerning arts education and access
- Access to grant funding for arts programming
- Incentives to invest in sequential fine arts instruction for all students

**Arts and Cultural Partners:**

Alley Theatre
Anjali Dance Theatre*
Apollo Chamber Players*
Ars Lyrica
Art League Houston
Aurora Picture Show*
Brazilian Arts Foundation*
Community Artists' Collective*
Contemporary Arts Museum Houston
DA CAMERA chamber music & jazz
Dance Houston*
Dance of Asian America*
FotoFest Inc.
The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts
Houston Chamber Choir*
Hope Stone, Inc.
Houston Symphony
Houston Youth Symphony
Main Street Theater
Multicultural Education and Counseling through the Arts (MECA)
Mercury - The Orchestra Redefined
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Revels Houston*
River Oaks Chamber Orchestra
Psophonia Dance Company*
Society for the Performing Arts
Soul Street Dance Company*
Theatre Under The Stars (TUTS)
University of Houston Dance Ensemble*
Young Audiences of Houston
  Umbrella Organizations: Brave Little Company, City Dance, Impande Ye Africa,
  Mixteco Ballet Folklorico, Voices from the Past

(The * denotes an organization who provides educational programming in partnership with Young Audiences of Houston)

Call to Arts Organizations:

- If you are an arts organization and would like to know how you can contribute to the Arts Access Initiative, please fill out this survey.
- Interested in being a part of the Arts Access Initiative? Please contact Deborah Lugo at deborah@yahouston.org.

About the Houston Arts Access Initiative
The Arts Access Initiative is Houston's action plan for ensuring equitable arts access for every K-8 Houston Independent School District student. We work with Houston ISD leaders, city officials, arts and cultural organizations, higher education leaders, businesses, philanthropic community, principals, teachers, parents and students to advance student arts access through partnerships, data collection, advocacy and strategy.

The Arts Access Initiative is committed to three goals for arts and arts education access in Houston ISD: Equity, Impact & Sustainability.

2013-2014 Arts Access Initiative Summary: HERE
Interactive Arts Access Map: HERE
Twitter: @houartsaccess

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Young Audiences of Houston, Arts for Learning, a 501(c)(3) organization, is the backbone organization and fiscal agent for the Arts Access Initiative.

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WWW.ARTSACCESSINITIATIVE.ORG