

***A Letter in Support of Arts Education  
In New York City Public Schools***

May 5, 2014

Carmen Fariña  
Chancellor  
New York City Department of Education  
52 Chambers Street  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chancellor Fariña,

We write today to thank you and Mayor de Blasio for your long-standing support of arts education, and to urge that the Department of Education set aside the necessary funding in the City budget to ensure that every New York City public school has a certified arts teacher and rich cultural partnerships, as part of a comprehensive curriculum.

As professional artists and performers, we all remember the first person who opened our eyes to the magic and wonder of the arts. For some, it was a dynamic music or theater teacher who challenged us to explore and question boundaries. For others, it was a dance instructor who encouraged expression through movement, or an art teacher who exposed us to perspectives as diverse as New York City itself.

As we know you appreciate, the arts not only build texture and depth into the City's landscape, they also help us connect to others in unique and powerful ways, and push us to grow.

When we give City students a vibrant arts education, we offer them critical opportunities to see and understand their surroundings in new ways, and to shape the world around them. Every child should have this opportunity, but as a recent report by New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer found, 28 percent of our schools lack even one full-time, certified arts teacher and 16 percent have no arts or cultural partnerships. This is a shame in the cultural capital of the world, where arts education is not just a part of our heritage, but very often the gateway to a career in the arts and creative sector.

Moreover, as the Comptroller's report underscored, children hit hardest by this reality live in some of the City's lowest-income neighborhoods. In the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn – home to 31 percent of all City schools – more than 42 percent of schools lack a full- or part-time certified arts teacher, and nearly half have no arts or cultural partnerships. This is a wrong that needs to be made right – zip codes should never determine whether a child can access the arts.

We thank the City Council for including funding for expanded arts education in its proposed budget, and we urge the Department of Education to ensure that every public school student has the chance to engage in a vibrant arts education. Let's make sure that New York City is home to tomorrow's great artists, just as it is today.

Respectfully,

- ❖ *David Auburn, Pulitzer and Tony Award-Winning Author of "Proof"*
- ❖ *Richard Brooks, Actor*
- ❖ *Danny Burstein, Actor*
- ❖ *Kerry Butler, Tony-Nominated Actress and Recording Artist*
- ❖ *Kathleen Chalfant, Actor, Tony Nominee, Drama Desk Award Winner*
- ❖ *Lee Daniels, Award-Winning Director of "Precious" and "The Butler"*
- ❖ *Lena Dunham, Writer and Filmmaker*
- ❖ *Scott Ellis, Director*
- ❖ *Katie Finneran, Tony Award-winning Broadway and TV Actress*
- ❖ *Quiara Alegria Hudes, Pulitzer Prize-Winning Playwright*
- ❖ *Scarlett Johansson, Actress*
- ❖ *Bill T. Jones, Dancer and Choreographer*
- ❖ *Zoe Lister Jones, Actress and Writer*
- ❖ *Rebecca Luker, Actress, Singer and Recording Artist*
- ❖ *David Margulies, Film and Stage Actor*
- ❖ *Malachy McCourt, Award-Winning Author*
- ❖ *Lin-Manuel Miranda, Composer, Actor, Tony and Grammy Award Winner*
- ❖ *Brad Oscar, Tony-Nominated Actor*
- ❖ *Rosie Perez, Urban Arts Partnership Artistic Board Chair*
- ❖ *Cynthia Rowley, Designer*
- ❖ *Mark Ruffalo, Actor and Director*
- ❖ *Luis Salgado, Dancer, Founder, C.E.O and Artistic Director, Revolución Latina*
- ❖ *Leigh Silverman, Director*
- ❖ *Lois Smith, Actor, Two-Time Tony Nominee; Drama Desk Award Winner*
- ❖ *Tarik Black Thought Trotter, Founding Member of The Roots*

List in formation.