

Dear Membership,

Times are hard in New Mexico. Art and Music are once again being discussed as subjects that schools can do without, or have much less of. Have you found yourself speaking up and out defending your jobs and how the arts help students? We want to hear from you and see how we can help and advocate.

I am one of two-art teachers at El Dorado Community School in Santa Fe, a parent of two and an educator of around 350. I spoke recently to the board and parents in our community when I saw that professional development was on the cutting board. This directly affects all of us and our planned annual convention in November. I am worried how many people will be able to afford this on their own, without help? Will we all have art positions? Our board has worked so hard in the past year and I would hate for our momentum to stop. I told the school board that our greatest resource is one another, we can not cut professional development, it is how we stay informed and connected to our profession, the museums, drama, and mostly our students. Every study shows that having master teachers in a classroom improves student learning. You stay and become a master by continually learning.

Is student excellence what we are looking for? Don't we equate student motivation with student graduation? If you take art and music out of the schools, you have severely limited a student's inspiration to stay in a system without the connecting forces of music and art. I found a poem on music that inspired me to say, "I teach art not so that my students will become great artists, sculptors, painters, they may...but I teach art to connect learning, science, history, math, and Language arts. It is all Art! I teach art to teach beauty, compassion and how to live a life of value worth living..."

Last month I delivered 120 letters to Governor Richardson's office from students asking that their music and art not be cut from the budget. One wrote: Today I was informed that band and art might be cut from my school activities. Of the many emotions that hit me, the overall one was sadness. Band means the world to me, when I am having a bad day at school, band class is my escape. Band and all extra-curricular activities are **Very** important, without art and band, me and all the rest of the student body would probably lose all hope in school. In fact, I guarantee the grades of students will drop drastically. People are saying that we have to save the environment so that their children will have a future. They say we are the future. What future do we have when our only escape is grasped right from our hands? If you cut our extra curricular activities then there isn't a point in saving the environment, you've already destroyed it. Sincerely Ian David, 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

The National Art Convention is aptly titled Social Justice. For those of you who will be there, I look forward to seeing you. Please email me at : [design@ronirohr.com](mailto:design@ronirohr.com), let's start sharing our stories, planning events together closer to home, making our community tighter because we will need one another more than ever.

Best in life and art, Roni Rohr /NMAEA/President

