

Remarks of Robert B. Morrison
NJ Arts Education Annual Report Release
September 9, 2019
Paramus High School
Paramus NJ

Thank you, Governor Murphy for being with us today to celebrate this important milestone for our state and for sharing, in such touching fashion, your own artistic journey. Mr. Narducci is looking down on us now with a very big smile on his face.

Thank you, Superintendent Robinson, Principal Kiem, Arts Supervisor Vartanian, faculty and students for welcoming us into your home and for all your efforts to organize this morning's event.

Today really is a celebration of an incredible milestone for our state and our nation. The release today of the 2019 New Jersey Arts Education Annual Report documents New Jersey as the first state in the nation to provide universal access to arts instruction in all of our schools. Now, this did not happen overnight. This has been a 15-year effort led by an incredible partnership of diverse organizations. This includes the New Jersey State Dept of Education, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, The Geraldine R, Dodge Foundation, ArtPride NJ, Quadrant Research, and Arts Ed NJ with additional support from the Jay and Linda Grunin Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Additional partners include the New Jersey School Boards Association New Jersey School Administrators Association, New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, NJEA, NJ PTA, the professional associations for Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Art, the NJ State Board of Education, and a list of cultural organizations too numerous to mention.

I also wish to acknowledge David Bryan – who could not be with us. David is the Tony award winner for his hit Broadway musical Memphis and keyboard player for Bon Jovi. David has been instrumental in supporting this project since the beginning.

This fifteen year collaboration has used data to reveal the status of arts in our schools. This information has been used to transform arts education programs across the state... and here at Paramus High School... which is now recognized as a model school in the arts.

As the Governor mentioned, since that first census... not only have we reduced the number of students without access to arts education from more than 77,000 students to ZERO - we have seen an INCREASE in student arts participation from 65% to 81% . This means 250,000 more students engaged in the arts this year than a decade ago... a quarter of a million more arts students! And more than 7,000 arts educators provide the gift of the arts to nearly 1.1 million students each and every day. THIS is what we are celebrating here today.

Now I am not the only one who thinks this is important... most New Jerseyans agree! In a recent Rutgers Eagleton Poll **90%** of New Jersey residents agree that arts education is very important for our students. And you know 90% New Jerseyans never agree on anything!

And while we celebrate this milestone, we must also acknowledge that more work needs to be done to address issues of quality, diversity of artistic opportunities and inequities that exist in some of our communities. This is the work we must now address.

And there is a VERY important reason to do so.

There exists in certain circles this myth that arts education is only for the gifted and talented. This is completely false. The arts are for everyone... **every single student**... just as fundamental to a basic education as math, science, social studies, language arts, physical education and world languages.

The Steve Jobs connection to arts education was mentioned earlier. Did you know Computer pioneer Jef Raskin credits music as the inspiration for the development of the personal computer. And, as you just heard, Governor Murphy credits his involvement in theatre as a contributing factor in his own success.

Steve Job's, Jef Raskin, Governor Murphy did not study the arts as a pre-determined strategy to design elegant fonts, invent the personal computer, or to become Governor of the great state of New Jersey... but they all credit what they learned in the arts as being critical to their own success in life.

We do not teach the arts to create great artists. We teach the arts to create great people.

That is why today's milestone is so important for all New Jersey students. That is why this milestone is important as an inspirational model for others states across the nation. And that is why we celebrate arts education not only for this week... but for all 52 weeks throughout the year.

Thank you again, Governor Murphy for your support, your story, your leadership and for providing this glowing spotlight on the importance of arts education for all of our students.

Thank you!