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News Release

From Seattle Public Schools

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SPS receives \$1 million planning grant aimed at enhancing arts instruction in classroom

Seattle Public Schools has received a \$1million grant from the New York-based Wallace Foundation to engage the community and develop a multi-year plan for introducing more arts instruction into the classroom.

The Foundation's Arts Learning Initiative planning grant, which runs from July 2011 through January 2013, will support development of a comprehensive K-12 arts education plan aimed at increasing quality learning opportunities for all students, especially those with the least access to the arts.

The 19-month planning process will further advance a five-year effort between Seattle Public Schools and the City of Seattle— known as the Arts Education Partnership – to build a system and aligned resources (including budget, arts partnerships, professional development and instructional tools) to put the arts back in education for all students as a means to encourage creative expression and develop job and life skills.

Outcomes of the SPS planning process will include: refined baseline data on arts learning access; staffing plan for provision of a minimum of two arts forms delivered in grades K-12; SPS arts curricula including common assessments and units of study; tools for teachers, teaching artists and principals to assess student learning across art forms and content area; tools to support city arts organization integration with school-based plans and goals; and identification of policies, systems and funding sources to support full implementation and sustainability of the completed plan.

SPS currently has over 200 arts organizations working in partnership with our schools providing in-school and after-school learning opportunities. Coordination of these efforts in addition to addressing equitable distribution of arts specialists will be key focus areas of the planning period.

“We appreciate this generous grant from The Wallace Foundation, which will help us create an arts plan that leverages our existing resources and coordinates community efforts to ensure all of our students have access to a high-quality arts education,” said Interim Superintendent Dr. Susan Enfield. “We know that our families value the role that the visual and performing arts play in the lives of their children, and research has shown that an arts education benefits students long after they leave high school.”

Based in part on research conducted by the RAND Corporation, a non-profit that supports improved policy and decision making through research and analysis, Wallace encourages communities to develop a coordinated effort that brings together schools, arts institutions, city agencies and related groups to improve arts education in grades K-12. As part of the planning process, Seattle Public Schools will engage families, funders and city arts organizations through surveys, focus groups, interest-specific meetings and working groups to ensure their values and perspectives are represented in the final plan.

Through the Wallace Arts Learning Initiative planning grant, Seattle Public Schools will have access to a national learning community of school districts also focused on arts education, including Boston Public Schools, Dallas Independent School District and Los Angeles Unified School District.

About the Wallace Foundation: The Wallace Foundation is a national philanthropy that supports and shares effective ideas and practices to expand learning and enrichment for disadvantaged children. The foundation maintains an online library of research reports and other publications at www.wallacefoundation.org. Included are lessons and information stemming from the foundation’s current efforts in: strengthening school leadership to improve student achievement; creating more time for learning during the summer and school year; enhancing after-school opportunities; improving arts education; and developing audiences for the arts.

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