

The State of Arts Education in Broward County Public Schools

BY DR. FRANK TILL, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS



The arts also teach our students to be more tolerant and open, promoting good citizenship and character, while allowing them to express themselves creatively. These programs help our troubled youth by providing an alternative to delinquent behavior and truancy, while improving students' attitudes toward school.

Even though an overwhelming majority of Americans believe that arts education is important enough to be taught in schools, the truth is there is not enough funding to support it. At a time when others are concerned, Broward County School Board members are doing something about it by providing the financial support and mission to imbue every student with the knowledge of music, dance, drama and visual expression. The Board has adopted standards that incorporate the arts at all grade levels with testing to ensure students learn. All Broward County Public Schools offer instruction in the visual and performing arts.

Arts education is an important part of the total curriculum in all of our schools, and students are encouraged to participate in these programs throughout all grade levels. The arts are regarded as essential to the education of all

students, and students are offered a comprehensive and balanced program in the visual and performing arts, which reflects the District's core curriculum standards.

Our schools offer award-winning programs in the arts. The Student Enrichment In The Arts (SEAS) Program is one such program. A successful partnership with the Broward Center for the Performing Arts, the SEAS program is designed to support and fund enrichment activities for students of Broward County. The program provides students the opportunity to participate in artistic, cultural and enrichment activities that supplement the core curriculum. This year's season of SEAS shows is directed to improve student reading and literacy. Through cultural arts, dance, theater, drama, history and diversity, programming is designed to facilitate and enhance educational learning.

I believe the arts are an important tool for improving standardized test scores and ensuring that all students will achieve to their highest potential, while instilling in them an appreciation for the arts that will enrich their lives into adulthood.

Dr. Frank Till has been superintendent of Broward County Schools since 1999.

At a time when arts education in our public schools is threatened by budget cuts and our emphasis is on FCAT testing, Broward County Public Schools continues to incorporate arts education at all grade levels. The District is also pressing its commitment to ensuring that all students develop an understanding of and appreciation for the arts.

This commitment extends to assisting students in pursuing post-secondary and career opportunities in the arts. The Arts for the Future Scholarship Fund is a communitywide initiative, which promotes artistic career opportunities for graduating high school seniors. Over the past six years, more than \$300,000 in scholarships was awarded to students pursuing education in the arts.

There is no better way to improve student achievement than by challenging students academically through the arts. The arts develop students' ability to think creatively and solve problems. The District's performing and visual arts magnet programs provide experiences in dance, vocal and instrumental music, art and drama. Students are able to participate in an enhanced program focusing on music, drama and visual art.

