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**STATEMENT ON *THE NATION'S REPORT CARD:*
*ARTS 2008 MUSIC & VISUAL ARTS***

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Good morning. I'm pleased to be with you today to discuss the NAEP 8th grade arts assessment.

Long before I started working in education, I was trained as a classical pianist. One question on the NAEP assessment used a small segment from the opening of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, a wonderful slide passage of instrumental blues. Eighth graders were asked to identify the solo instrument played in the passage. Only about half correctly identified it as a clarinet. When I listened to the recording in the music assessment, I remembered hearing that passage on stage as an excited 16-year-old piano soloist with the local symphony.

I would not have been able to be a professional musician without K-12 arts education. I had the same opportunities that some students have today: choir; orchestra; band; solo, accompanying and ensemble work; performances; auditioning; and learning the academic underpinnings of the arts. Because of that professional background and our family's interests, I'll be weaving personal and NAEP comments together today.

Most U.S. children depend on the K-12 school system for at least a basic arts education. In the 1990s, after substantial debate, it became clear to many that students need a balanced K-12 education for learning and life. That includes an education in the arts that gives insight and knowledge beyond what children get in reading, social studies and what we now know as STEM (science, technology, engineering and math). In 1997—after a break of almost 20 years—NAEP conducted an assessment to measure what students know and can do in music, visual arts, and theater. This Arts NAEP is the second to be given using that framework.

Our eight-year-old son Danny is here with me today. He is a public-school student in Michigan, and was in first grade when this assessment was given last year. He sings, loves frogs, swimming and Cub Scouts, magic tricks, break-dancing, and acting out *Star Wars* scenes. Like

many of his classmates, he thrives in choir, class plays and recitals, and loves having his art displayed in public. His parents support any outside arts program in which he wishes to participate. Last fall Danny performed in a local youth music theater production. A number of children needed scholarships to take part. Because of Michigan's financial decline, we anticipate that even more students may need help this fall. Economic hardship is growing, reaching across professions, occupations, and income brackets. School budget cuts are underway with more projected next year. If we follow the current schedule for NAEP arts assessments, Danny will be in high school when the next one is given in 2016 – meaning this would be the only arts assessment that might have some impact on his 12 years of school.

Both the 1997 and 2008 assessments were developed using the NAEP arts framework. It specifies that arts knowledge and skills are to be measured in four disciplines—music, dance, theater and visual arts—using three arts processes: creating, responding, and performing, where appropriate. It is important to note that due to budget constraints and the small number of U.S. schools with programs in theater and dance, these two disciplines were not assessed in 2008. In music, only the responding process was assessed; in visual arts, both responding and creating were assessed. That means seven of ten arts components determined to be important in the '90s were not assessed last year in eighth grade, and no assessment was given in fourth or twelfth grades.

I was part of the Governing Board when that decision was made. We felt we had no choice because assessing the arts is very costly, and because of the pressure to maintain a regular schedule of assessments in other subjects, particularly those mandated by Congress.

As we move through this era of educational accountability, it's easier to see in hindsight the role that assessment is playing in schools today. If a subject isn't assessed, it may not be valued as part of a comprehensive education. If it's not valued, it may not be taught – which could mean an even greater decline in school theater and dance programs, or of the visual art and music programs assessed in 2008. National policymakers should consider carefully again the role arts should have in a comprehensive K-12 public education, and NAGB should support the goal of a broad, well-balanced education with a more substantive national assessment of the arts.

What does this release tell us about eighth graders' knowledge of the arts? Unfortunately, while the scale scores give us some understanding of differences between groups they do not provide a good sense of the level of student achievement. The answers to particular questions do give some understanding. For example, about half of eighth graders could identify a Renaissance painting. A little more than half could identify a half note or the correct time signature for a piece of printed music. About 20 percent knew that the symbol "p" in a musical score stands for *piano* in Italian, meaning to play softly.

While these results are mediocre, not dire, there are disturbing signs for this musician, and unsettling news for the parents of a child who learned what that "p" means back in first-grade choir.

Because the assessment was given just before the U.S. economy started to deteriorate, it's difficult to project how fragile K-12 arts education may become as state budgets encounter difficulties. As we evaluate this assessment today, we need to ask policy makers what importance the arts have for us as a society. What amount and quality of K-12 arts instruction is necessary to maintain the fabric of our culture? Do we value arts education for its skills and understandings themselves, or only for the utility it may have as students learn other subjects?

How often should NAEP assess each arts discipline to show trends and changes, strengths and vulnerabilities?

The arts employ many Americans. In my home state of Michigan, it is estimated there are about 70,000 jobs statewide in arts and culture. Americans for the Arts reported in its 2007 Arts and Economic Prosperity study that the national nonprofit arts industry contributed \$166.2 billion in economic activity in 2005 – with \$29.6 billion in total tax revenues, and a total of 5.7 million jobs.

I believe the arts are integral to society if we are to keep our sense of humanity. They are important in their own domains, and every child should have access to learning them. Despite the anonymity of television, the Internet, and other isolating influences, the arts draw us together through time and space to think, shape, move, draw, paint, dance, play, listen, act, speak, sing, and create.

To quote the website for this release, “The arts provide meaning to learning. They serve as a vehicle for acquiring the skills to which educational reformers have said students should aspire: problem-solving, higher order thinking, flexibility, persistence and cooperation.” In our increasingly diverse society, arts education gives an important chance for calm collaboration, and the opportunity to negotiate and work through differences for a common goal. For children at risk, the arts provide another entry point to K-12 success, and can provide powerful motivation to stay in school. They give all of us a sense of the past, a snapshot of current issues and a vision for the future beyond the immediate needs of our everyday lives.

NAGB does not decide what constitutes a comprehensive K-12 education. It responds to public policy debates and to funding by Congress, the National Endowment for the Arts, and others. I respectfully ask those entities to provide guidance and money so we can plan frequent, thoughtful and probing assessments of student achievement in all the arts disciplines at grades 4, 8 and 12 in the years to come. Thank you.

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