



OREGON ARTS
COMMISSION

For Immediate Release

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First Annual Oregon Arts Education Congress Issues
“Oregon Bill of Creative Rights”
*Oregon Arts Commission Convened Statewide Delegates to Develop
Long-range Creative Vision for Oregon students*

November 20, 2008, Portland, ORE. — The Oregon Arts Commission convened the 1st Annual Arts Education Congress on Monday, November 17, at the Kennedy School in NE Portland. The Congress brought together 100 selected delegates from across the state to discuss issues facing arts education in Oregon. The selected issues were identified, in part, through an online survey taken by over 400 teachers, artists, business leaders, parent advocates, elected officials, and liaisons from key statewide associations, among many others.

The delegates generated a first draft of an “Oregon Bill of Creative Rights” in support of sustainable, equitable experiences in all art forms for K-12 students. The completed Bill of Creative Rights will present unified messaging for advocacy efforts around the state and in framing a long-range strategic plan for arts education.

Students and schools were invited to contribute to this process by submitting preambles to the Bill of Creative Rights prior to the Congress. Students from responding schools -- The Opal School (Portland), Oregon City High School, LaGrande High School and Arlington Middle School -- cited the importance of understanding others, thinking creatively and learning self-expression as reasons to value education in the arts.

"The Oregon Department of Education is committed to partnerships that pursue sustainable strategies to improve arts education for all of Oregon's pre-K-12 students," wrote Superintendent of Schools **Susan Castillo** in a statement to the Congress. "We know the arts can play a key role in creating high levels of achievement for every child. All students deserve the opportunity to connect with their innate creative and innovative talents, fully preparing them for life in the 21st century."

Keynote speaker, **John Jay**, Creative Director for the Portland-based Weiden + Kennedy, charged Congress delegates to “brand” Oregon education on a national level, while keeping a broad focus on the current educational and financial environment. "Innovation and being practical are not mutually exclusive... today, truly creative people merge both," said Jay. "We

need an argument for arts education that will withstand the rigorous financial realities and the competitive nature of the real world." Echoing the Oregon Department of Education's commitment to producing innovative, 21st century minds, Jay called for new models in both education and public perception of the value of the arts.

A broad variety of speakers addressed the Congress, including **Charlie Walker** (The Chalkboard Project), State Representative **Chris Harker (D-Washington County)**, Oregon Labor Commissioner **Brad Avakian**, Redmond Superintendent of Schools **Vickie Fleming** and **Joyce White** of Grantmakers of Oregon and SW Washington. Storyteller **Will Hornyak** concluded the day's events with a fable about the importance of working together and bridging gaps in ideology and history.

The Oregon Arts Commission has assembled a leadership team responsible for planning the next steps in developing a long-range vision for advancing arts education in Oregon. The team has been asked to map an arts education workplan to focus advocacy, expertise and energy towards common goals and to accomplish that task by the end of March 2009. **Jean Boyer Cowling**, Vice Chair of the Oregon Arts Commission will lead the team. Other members include **Michael Fridley** (Arts Specialist, Oregon Department of Education), **Judy Rompa** (Arts Chairperson, Oregon PTA), **Lori Hager** (Assistant Professor of Arts and Administration, University of Oregon), **Diane Syrcle** (Executive Director, Portland Youth Philharmonic), **Shannon McBride** (past president, Oregon Art Education Association), and **Jeff Aeschliman** (Public Affairs Specialist, State Farm Insurance).

Background on the 1st Annual Oregon Arts Education Congress can be found at www.oregonartseducationcongress.org.

About the Oregon Arts Commission

The Oregon Arts Commission provides leadership, funding and arts programs through its grants, special initiatives and services. Nine commissioners, appointed by the Governor, determine arts needs and establish policies for public support of the arts. The Arts Commission became part of the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department in 1993 in recognition of the expanding role the arts play in the broader social, economic and educational arenas of Oregon communities. In 2003, the Oregon legislature moved the operations of the Oregon Cultural Trust to the Arts Commission, streamlining operations and making use of the Commission's expertise in grantmaking, arts and cultural information and community cultural development. The Arts Commission is supported with General Funds appropriated by the Oregon legislature, federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and funds from the Oregon Cultural Trust.