

## All County Intro 2007

Good evening ladies and gentleman, my name is Joan Fretz, and as the Director of Fine and Performing Arts for the Huntington School District, it is an honor to welcome you to the 51st annual Senior High School, All County Music Festival. Tonight, as your sons, daughters and students perform, you will hear evidence of their extraordinary musical talents. The music they will perform will demand the highest level of technical and expressive skills. Thanks to your support, and the guidance of their music teachers, their musical skills will be on display for us all to admire.

Yet, I wonder if you have considered all of the other personal strengths their musical training has helped them develop. Through their experiences in music education, they have become more confident, reflective, and expressive. They have learned how to work in a disciplined manner over a very long period of time, to develop a skill to a high level of proficiency. They have learned how to collaborate and cooperate with others, to achieve success as a group as well as an individual. They have been exposed to the music and culture of many different worlds, and have come to understand and appreciate our similarities and our differences. They have learned how to create and visualize an image or message, simply with sound. They have learned to embrace history through art, and art, through history. These skills are shining through just as brightly tonight, as these fine young ladies and gentleman grace our stage.

Not every child has the opportunity to grow from within as your children have. The maturity and depth of character that your children possess comes from experiences like making music. And, it is no surprise to hear that students who study music enjoy academic success as well. When a child receives consistent acknowledgement for his or her efforts and accomplishments, that child develops a strong self-concept, which encourages them to strive in all areas of study.

As we review the state of education today, it has become apparent that there are many unintended consequences of high states testing. The obsession with standardized tests has removed much of the creativity and critical thinking in academic subjects, has labeled children as failures and consequently, has made them lose confidence in their ability to learn. Except in the arts...where we have been spared the constraints of the standardized tests. As experts are searching for ways to help children who are failing, they are beginning to look at the arts and realize their power to inspire children to strive to succeed.

So, tonight, on behalf of the arts educators in the audience, I thank you for insuring that your community maintains arts education as an integral part of our educational programs. Your children have enjoyed the rewards of a balanced curriculum that develops the whole child. We need your voice of support and reason, as administrators, fearful of failing grades, consider replacing arts experiences with more academic remediation sessions. Consider the damage done when a child who thrives in the arts, but struggles with academics, is denied the one subject that builds his self-confidence and love of learning. That mindset is eroding our arts programs.

Fortunately, there are signs that the pendulum is slowly beginning to swing towards a more progressive approach to education. Children's strengths and talents are being considered when choices have to be made. Educators are noticing the success of at-risk students in the arts and rethinking past decisions to eliminate the one reason they even come to school.

On behalf of all of our children, I encourage you to stay informed and vigilant when decisions are being made that may eliminate opportunities for our young people. When parents demand support for the arts, school officials hear you. Let's enjoy tonight's program not only for the achievement of these talented

children, but for the achievement of arts education. May the gift of the arts continue to shine in all of our children for many generations to come.