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May 4, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: Legislative Education Study Committee

FR: Kathleen Forrer

RE: STAFF BRIEF: HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS

The 2006 interim Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) workplan includes a presentation on the possibility of establishing a public residential high school for the arts to serve students from throughout New Mexico.

Issues:

- During the 2006 legislative session, identical bills to enact a *New Mexico School for the Arts Act* were introduced in the House and the Senate; however, neither bill passed. Had the legislation been enacted, a residential high school, the New Mexico School for the Arts, would have been established in Santa Fe “to provide free, publicly funded education and training in grades nine through twelve for exceptional artistically talented students who are residents of New Mexico and who meet the admissions criteria and standards of the school.”
- As envisioned in the proposed legislation, the school’s curriculum would have included “an academic program similar to that required of public schools,” as well as education in visual arts, graphic arts, creative writing, dance, music, and theater.

- Testimony before House Education Committee (HEC) regarding the proposed New Mexico School for the Arts raised a number of issues, including:
 - how much establishing and maintaining the facility would cost;
 - how students would be selected;
 - whether there are any conflicts between a selective admissions policy and the New Mexico Constitution (Article XII, Section 1 of the *Constitution of New Mexico* states that a “uniform system of free public schools sufficient for the education of, and open to, all the children of school age in the state shall be established and maintained”); and
 - how instructional staff would be licensed.

- Because of the questions raised during the HEC hearing, additional legislation was introduced in both the Senate and the House to fund a feasibility study. As amended in the House, this bill would have appropriated \$500,000 to the LESC for a feasibility study on the creation of a publicly funded statewide residential high school for the arts. Although neither bill passed, the chair of the HEC requested LESC, during the 2006 interim, to discuss the feasibility of establishing such a school.

Background:

A number of states have established publicly funded high schools for the arts; however, most serve the needs of students in a single school district or attendance area. The following four public high schools all serve a larger population, and all stress their strong academic programs in addition to their unique concentrations in the arts:

- Perhaps the best-known school for the performing arts is the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts (LaGuardia Arts) in New York City. Located in Manhattan, it is the school dramatized in the movie *Fame*. The school is one of four specialized high schools in New York City, and as such receives special funding from the New York Legislature. The enabling legislation for the four schools provides for the “establishment and maintenance” of La Guardia Arts and defines the school’s admissions criteria: students are selected on the basis of competitive talent auditions and academic record. The school offers concentrations in fine art, dance, drama, music, and technical theater; its academic program includes advanced placement classes in English, foreign language, science, mathematics, and social studies. Operated by the New York City Department of Education, the school provides a free, publicly funded program for approximately 2,400 students from all five boroughs of New York City. The stated mission of the school is “to provide each student with professional preparation in conservatory arts education and in college preparatory academic education.”

- Part of the Baltimore, Maryland public school system, the Baltimore School for the Arts (BSA) is a four-year public high school that offers concentrations in classical music, theater, dance, and visual arts in combination with a comprehensive, college preparatory academic program. The school’s funding comes from the Baltimore City Public School System, supplemented by private funds raised through the BSA Foundation. The school’s charter, which is actually a resolution of the Baltimore City School Board, gives BSA “the structure and the authority to design and implement policies and programs

necessary to be successful in its mission as a pre-professional arts high school.” The school is proud of the fact that it has produced “numerous Presidential Scholars in the Arts” and that many of its students have gone on to Ivy League and other prestigious colleges. The school has approximately 300 students, about 75 percent of whom are Baltimore city residents; the other 25 percent come from outside the city. Students are accepted to the school on the basis of an audition or portfolio review.

- Located in Birmingham, the Alabama School of Fine Arts is a partially residential public high school funded by the Alabama Legislature. With an enrollment of approximately 350, the school offers students in grades 7-12 programs in creative writing, dance, mathematics and science, music, theater arts, and visual arts, as well as the required core academic courses. According to its website, the school “operates under its own enabling legislation, policies and procedures, guided by a state-appointed Board of Trustees, under whom serves a staff of more than 100 full- and part-time administrators, teachers and support workers.” Students are selected on the basis of an audition, a review of their standardized test scores, an interview, and some type of performance. The school accepts students from throughout the state of Alabama and from other states. In-state students pay a “small semester matriculation fee” but no tuition. Out-of-state students pay tuition. The dormitory accommodates up to 90 students, who are assessed room and board; however, scholarships are available to defray the cost.
- A free-standing campus within the University of North Carolina system, the North Carolina School of the Arts was established in 1963 by the state’s General Assembly as the “first state-supported, residential school of its kind in the nation.” Offering the high school diploma, undergraduate and graduate degrees, and the Professional Artist Certificate, the school prepares “talented students” for professional careers in dance, music, drama, filmmaking, and theatrical design and production. In fall 2004, 1,057 students were enrolled: 556 from North Carolina and 501 from out of state. Of those 1,057 students, 266 were enrolled in grades 8-12. To be considered for admission to the school, a prospective student must provide academic transcripts, standardized test scores, letters of recommendation, a résumé, and, depending upon the artistic discipline the student plans to pursue, complete an audition or interview. Although out-of-state high school students and all college students are charged tuition, the state of North Carolina pays the full cost of attending—tuition, fees, and room and board—for all in-state high school students. In addition to these revenue sources, the school depends upon financial support from individuals, corporations, foundations, and other organizations for “scholarships, guest artists, faculty development, cultural outreach and program support.”

Presenters:

Ms. Catherine Oppenheimer, Artistic Director and Co-Founder of the National Dance Institute of New Mexico, and Mr. J.D. Bullington, Senior Policy Advisor and Director of New Mexico Government Relations for Brownstein Hyatt & Farber, will provide an overview of what a New Mexico high school for the arts might look like in terms of student body, faculty, curriculum, and facilities.

Questions the committee may wish to consider:

1. How would students be selected to attend the proposed high school for the arts?
2. What types of outreach activities could be utilized to identify prospective students outside of the major metropolitan areas?
3. What grades would be included in the proposed high school and what would be the number of students served by the school?
4. What percentage of the projected enrollment would be residential students?
5. Where would the school be located?
6. How would the school's operational costs be funded?
7. How would the school's capital outlay costs be funded? Would the school be required to meet the state's adequacy standards for public school facilities?
8. Nationwide, most public high schools for the arts rely at least partially on private funding sources, such as nonprofit foundations, to supplement state support. To date, have any efforts been made to secure private funding?
9. What would be the status of New Mexico's proposed high school for the arts? Would it be a charter school, a state-supported school, a constitutional entity, a branch of a public college or university, or some other type of entity?
10. Should a workgroup be convened to further examine the feasibility of and the need for a public residential high school for the arts in New Mexico? If so, what should be the composition of the work group?