



## **Fulfilling our Responsibility to Provide America's Students with a Comprehensive Education**

### **A Statement in Response to the State of the Union**

On the evening of February 12th, 2013, President Obama spoke directly to the nation regarding a variety of significant domestic policy issues. The Music Education Policy Roundtable is pleased that a portion of the President's State of the Union address pertained to the importance of addressing education reform in America. We applaud the President's support for improving both K-12 and higher education for all citizens. Such initiatives are necessary so as to ensure our nation's future prosperity.

The Roundtable would like to express its concern, however, that neither music education, nor arts education, generally, were included in the President's remarks as an element of the solution to equipping students "for the demands of a high-tech economy." The needs of the Twenty-First Century workforce cannot and will not be met through STEM alone. Experts including Richard Florida, Daniel Pink, and Ken Robinson suggest that creative experiences, like those provided for by education in music and the other arts, are essential in preparing students for these new kinds of work.

According to neuroscientists, including Eriko Skoe and Nina Kraus, music education, specifically, has a demonstrable positive impact on brain development. Classroom music experiences provide students with the opportunity to develop skills to be creative, solve complex problems, and work collaboratively. Additionally, through music, students develop dispositions toward hard work, dedication, and perseverance. Music education facilitates the skills imperative for employers and employees in the Twenty-First Century workplace.

The Roundtable also cautions that while the President’s remarks regarding the relationship between education and job training are important and timely, they most certainly do not amount to the entirety of the value proposition of receiving a comprehensive education. While we agree that providing students with the skills necessary to succeed in the current job market must serve as one important aspect of a publically funded-education, it should never be schools’ sole purpose.

Ours is a vibrantly diverse nation with a rich history of peoples and cultures. The arts are an essential element of our humanity and an extension of our uniquely blended culture. We believe that students need and deserve a comprehensive education, including access to sequential, standards-based instruction in music, not just for the sake of our workforce, but because providing for it in their lives will enrich their contributions to society.

Educating the next generation of civically minded American citizens involves engaging students in the artistic traditions of their local and global communities as well as providing them with the knowledge and opportunities to participate in new artistic practices. Music specialists and others involved in arts education delivery are well aware of this. The strength of any nation should be judged not just on its business prowess, but also on the amount and quality of professional and amateur artistic endeavors in which its citizens engage. As such, The Music Education Policy Roundtable calls on President Obama to work closely with us during this next Congress in order to develop new legislative measures for enhancing music education’s federal footprint, and also to bring more attention to the cultural value of ensuring the presence of strong classroom music programs across America.

