

On Wednesday, January 27th, the Iowa Alliance for Arts Education sponsored the third annual Arts Advocacy Day at the state capitol in Des Moines. On that day, over 100 arts advocates and student performers were present to advocate for arts education in Iowa schools. In addition to contacting all 150 Iowa legislators, IAAE was able to testify for both the House and Senate Education Committees. The education committee testimony featured comments by Sarah Dougherty, Turnaround Arts Coordinator for Des Moines Public Schools, and actor Kal Penn, Turnaround Artist assigned to the Des Moines schools. They discussed the effect that integrated arts instruction at the Turnaround Arts schools has had on student achievement, school climate and parental involvement. The IAAE mentoring program for beginning arts teachers was also discussed. Deb Ragan, retired vocal director & mentor from Bettendorf, and Alex Steines, 3rd year teacher & vocal director at Albia Community Schools, spoke of the positive impact the mentoring program has had on arts instruction in the Albia school system.

Sarah Dougherty & Kal Penn, along with IAAE leaders, had individual meetings with both the majority and minority party leaders in the House and Senate. They also met with Linda Fandel, the governor's special assistant on education issues. The special guest performers for the day were the Williamsburg High School National Anthem singers, directed by Steve Manning. They performed the "Star Spangled Banner" at the opening of both the Iowa House and Senate.

The advocates informed the legislators that IAAE will be presenting at the State Board of Education meeting this spring. This purpose of this presentation is to propose the addition of Fine Arts to the Iowa Core. The advocates also were asking for financial support for the "Iowa Model of Excellence" mentoring program. Funding for the program has ceased, and IAAE is proposing a 50/50 match with any funds appropriated by the legislature to make continuation of this program feasible. Bill language for mentor grant funding is currently being drafted and will be submitted soon.

Arts Advocacy Day was a great success in energizing arts advocates throughout the state. IAAE would like to thank NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) for making the visit by Kal Penn possible, and all the advocates who spent the day in Des Moines. It was a great day for arts education in our state.

Thanks for being part of the Alliance.

Sincerely,

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