



MISSOURI RIDGE SCHOOL

5640 140TH AVE. NW ▪ WILLISTON, NORTH DAKOTA 58801 ▪ (701) 875-2041

March 8, 2021

Dear Chairman Nelson and Committee Members,

My name is Steve Guglich and I am a school principal in Williston. On behalf of the students of North Dakota, I am asking you to continue to support the North Dakota Council of the Arts by fully restoring their funding. As an educator for more than 27 years, I can honestly tell you that the Arts are an important aspect of education. Public schools provide a service to people that goes far beyond the core elements of Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science. What we do as educators is prepare children to become adults. We do this by giving them opportunities to explore their talents and then expand on those talents. By cutting funding for the Arts, we are taking that exposure away and we are catering only to students who excel in the core areas.

In my experience working with the North Dakota Council of the Arts and its Artist in Residence, we were able to not only fill a niche that was previously vacant, but we were also able to create a program that taught students how various forms of media work on an artistic level, a psychological level, and an economic level.

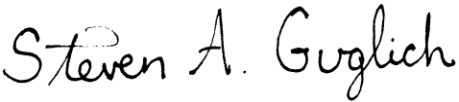
We partnered with community members from the local NBC News affiliate, a local drone pilot who once worked in the film industry in Hollywood, a local illustrator, and the Non-Profit Organization, NDStrong. Our Media Arts Program provided our students a valuable and unforgettable experience as they created, participated in, and showcased a variety of digital content, including several short films.

The importance of our program can be easily observed not only in its popularity, but also by looking at current trends and statistics on how students learn. We live in the digital age. Our students are always connected... always plugged in. Ian Jukes, an expert on how technology has changed education and the Co-Director of the 21st Century Fluency Project, once said that anyone born after 1980 is considered a "digital native" and anyone born before 1980 is considered a "digital immigrant". He further explains how the advances in technology, mainly computers and television, and the use of these media by children from an early age has literally redefined how neural pathways develop in their brain. As an educational leader for over twenty years, I have observed this myself. We are seeing that our students learn better when we speak their language. One major goal of this program is to help bridge the gap between the two generations. By teaching our students how media is used to convey messages and the various techniques used to get those messages to the viewers, the students themselves will become better communicators. They will also be aware of the hidden messages that media is trying to convey to them.

Furthermore, the Media Arts program, also serves as a creative outlet. Students have the ability to write, direct, edit and produce shorts for entertainment as well as educational content. In the middle school setting we only have our students for three years. Each year we are able to fund the program, we are able to develop new skills. Returning students are able to teach new students how to use the equipment and take their skills to the next level before moving on to the high school.

In conclusion, without the support of the North Dakota Council of Arts, we wouldn't be able to offer this unique, educational opportunity to our students, and to our community. We hope that you will fully restore funding to the North Dakota Council of the Arts, not only so we can continue our Media Arts Program, but so that many other children all over the state will benefit from the myriad of talented Artists in Residence that our state has to offer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven A. Guglich". The signature is written in a cursive style with a loop at the end of the last name.

Steven A. Guglich <><
Principal