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Community Arts Partnership Act (1994): Letter to Editor 01

Eliot L. Engel

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Local Interaction

To the Editor:

It was gratifying to see recognition of the value of arts education by the Clinton Administration, as reported in "U.S. Sets Voluntary Standard in Teaching the Arts" (news article, March 14).

After more than a decade of experimentation in our country's education system, a discernible path to success is emerging. In varied locations with widely differing problems, education programs that are working share a common bond: they are community based and highly creative.

It is important to continue building on the successes by supporting local initiatives that involve the entire community — teachers, students, administrators, parents, businesses and cultural institutions.

As a member of the House Education and Labor Committee, I have introduced a community arts partnership bill, a grant program targeted toward at-risk students that builds bridges between schools and local arts institutions. The measure has been included in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which is making its way through Congress. It is an example of putting our resources where they work best.

If we are to save our children from lives of crime and drug use, we must offer them an alternative that can be just as appealing and exciting. The arts — a seemingly simple yet often overlooked tool — may prove to be the most effective answer to this challenge.

ELIOT L. ENGEL
Member of Congress, 17th Dist., N.Y.
Washington, March 16, 1994