

To Whom it May Concern:

Community Board 3 supports the arts-in-education collaboration between Phoenix Theatre Ensemble and East Side Community High School. Both of these organizations are long term neighborhood institutions that contribute to the culture and vibrancy of the East Village community.

Phoenix Theatre Ensemble is a resident theatre company now in its 10th season of presenting classical and new plays with a resident ensemble. Additionally the company presents Phoenix-for-the-Family programming for East Village children, an international festival, and interactive programs and subsidized tickets for local seniors. Singled out by The Wall Street Journal as “one of the best”, Phoenix provides “pay-what-you-can” tickets so that everyone has access to quality theatre. The company has a strong 8-year history of providing arts-in-education programs with neighborhood public schools and for the current academic year Phoenix has entered into an ambitious collaborative program with East Side Community High School.

East Side Community High School, a title 1 school with a student body that is 90% minority, has received an “A” rating ever since grades have been assigned and has been named one of the city’s best public schools in the books “Public Middle Schools: New York City’s Best” and “New York City’s Best Public High Schools: A Parent’s Guide” by Clara Hemphill. However this school under the dynamic leadership of Principal Mark Federman, still struggles with funding cutbacks each year to provide his students with much needed arts programming. In order to provide these much needed programs, outside funding must be provided.

Phoenix Theatre Ensemble is providing at no cost to the school a school-day studio in theatre arts that will culminate in a student production at an Off Broadway theatre. Students study and perform the same play that is being presented by the professional company, and it will be performed by the students for their peers, families, and school faculty on the same set and in the same theatre as the professional actors. Professional actors, directors, and designers visit the studio and offer mentorship and guidance for the students while they prepare their production. In addition, actors and directors present “Bringing Literature to Life” workshops in English and literature classes for both the middle and high schools. This program cannot be continued without the support of outside funding.

Study after study have reported the benefits of arts education in our schools. The Center for Arts Education found that NYC high schools with the highest graduation rates also offer students the most access to arts education. However, when making difficult budgetary decisions these are often the very programs that are the first to be cut.

Community Board 3 understands the significant benefits of programs like this and the board encourages local and state support for this program and the support of concerned corporations and foundations to assist this collaborative effort between two important neighborhood constituents.

Sincerely,