

New York City Arts in Education Candidate Survey Project

Mayoral Candidates

The following questions were designed to determine candidates' positions on a number of issues related to the delivery of arts education (including music, dance, theater and visual arts) in New York City public schools. Questionnaires were delivered to all declared candidates for the Office of New York City Mayor.

Candidate: Randy Credico

1. What meaningful experiences, if any, with the arts, either in school or otherwise, did you have in your life and what did you gain from these experiences?

I have had nearly 50 years experience in the Arts. I really don't know where to begin. Was it at my father's mega nightclub in Ontario California, where I grew up watching Louis Armstrong, Bobby Darrin, Ray Charles, James Brown and Jimmy Durante? Was it entertaining my junior high baseball team with my early repertoire of impressions? Was it the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson in 1984, my first national TV Show as a political impressionist? Was it entertaining anti war activists in Nicaragua with my creation, Humorists Against War? Was it working with Red Buttons and Eddie Bracken in Reno in 1980? Was it using my ability as a performer to effect changes in New York's Racist Rockefeller Drug Laws as the NYTimes wrote about in a public profile? http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/01/nyregion/01profile.html?_r=0

Was it posing as the Greek cynic Diogenes in an Albany senate hearing on ethics in government <http://www.examiner.com/article/new-york-beware-here-comes-diogenes> or as satan to encourage clemencies by Andrew Cuomo <http://blog.timesunion.com/capitol/archives/180807/credico-as-satan-pushes-cuomo-for-pardons/> ?

There are so many moments spanning nearly 5 decades in show business that I cant really pin or pen it down. Using my art as a means to promote change would surely be the most rewarding memories I could possibly have if I gave it a lot of thought. There is a documentary about my life that has been on Netflix for 10 years and now is available on you tube. It was produced by Jack Black. It pretty much embodies in an hour my work as a performer and as an activist, in most cases it is hard to discern the differences. The film is called 60 spins around the Sun. It traces my life from childhood to 2003. http://movies.netflix.com/WiMovie/60_Spins_Around_the_Sun/70003232?locale=en-US

2. It is widely acknowledged that access to a well-rounded curriculum is a key component of a quality education. However, numerous studies show that over the past decade disciplines such as art, science, and social studies are getting crowded out of the school day. In New York City, for instance, only half of all elementary schools are providing the arts instruction that is outlined in state education law. What strategies do you envision for broadening the school-day curriculum?

I believe that the arts are absolutely and fundamentally vital to the growth of an individual> I began with show and tell in kindergarten and then in first grade we put on a number of plays. I put on my own plays in third and fourth grade. I took music in middle school and literature of film high school. I have

produced several documentaries on my own and hundreds of videos and advocacy ads as a result of that early exposure. All of these experience, on top of growing up with a father that ran a huge nightclub, led to the development of my senses and sensibilities as a human being

The exposure to the arts for a child is as important as math.

We need to put a massive amount of resources and energy into the revitalization of the arts and sciences in our public schools.

3. How, if at all, would you restructure the current system of school governance? How might this impact the delivery of arts instruction in city schools?

A radical new direction.

I would bring in a board to govern the system that would be composed of philosophers, historians, scientists, dance and music instructors, film and stage directors and human and civil rights activists. I would name Dr. Cornel West to be Chancellor of Schools.

4. The arts are recognized as a core subject area here in New York and at the federal level. However, while many schools in New York City do provide quality arts instruction, access to this instruction is far from universal. How would you ensure equity in the delivery of arts education in the following key areas:

A. Funding: Principals consistently cite budget constraints as the chief obstacle to providing arts education at their schools. While schools receive “Supplemental Arts Funding” each year (formerly known as Project Arts), as of 2007 principals are not required to spend these funds directly on arts education. What would you do to ensure that every school in the city has the resources to provide every student with a quality education that includes the arts?

No response given.

B. Qualified Instructors: Highly qualified certified arts teachers are the cornerstone of a quality arts program in schools. However, whether due to budget constraints, school size, or other factors, almost 20% of city schools have no certified arts instructor on staff. How could the city ensure that all of our public school students receive instruction from qualified instructors?

We would generate a stampede to our public schools with the kind of enthusiasm and energy Mr. West or someone like him would bring to our public school system.

C. Space: Lack of available in-school arts space is one of the top challenges principals face in implementing arts education. What policies would you implement to prevent the loss of arts spaces in public schools due to overcrowding, co-location, or other factors?

The city has plenty of space that is being set aside for condos. That would come to an end as soon as I am elected. The space would be used to construct more stages, film sets, dance studios etc to be used by our children in public schools.

We need to tax the living daylight out of wall street and use that money to hire more instructors from the arts. We need to make the public aware of how important arts and science are to a child's growth. We would blanket the airwaves with ads to garner support from the public and private sectors.

D. Partnerships: New York City has a rich array of cultural resources, including arts and cultural institutions and professional artists that play an important role in the lives and education of some of our school children. How would you ensure that all public school students and their families could enjoy meaningful engagement with these resources?

We would work with these private and public institutions to provide more opportunities for all of New York's children to view plays, music and dance productions and so forth. The city would subsidize the outstanding costs to realize this goal. We would bring the arts to the schools. We would ask for volunteers from various areas of the lively arts to sponsor field trips and to stage productions in all of our public schools. That is my goal. What the arts curriculum would be would be decided by the new chancellor and his progressive board (see question 3). Both classic and modern art forms would be included. From the Birds and Lysistrata to Aristophanes to Figaro by Beaumarchais to Tennessee Williams to Edward and from Vivaldi to Louis Armstrong to McCoy Tyner. And everything in between. I would bring in street theatre as practiced by Theatre of New York. Classic Dance to Elizabeth Streb. I could go on forever but I think you get my point and the direction I am committed. We also need to expand our public libraries.

5. The city's accountability system places a heavy emphasis on student performance on state assessments in English language arts and math. Currently, performance assessments for the arts are being piloted in city schools and while the arts can potentially factor into a high school's report card grade, the overall impact is minimal. Are there ways you would consider expanding or revising the school accountability system to incorporate the arts?

I have a problem with the performance assessment paradigms that are currently on the table. We need to make a massive transformation in the way our schools are individually staffed and funded. To insure a quality education there must be a major redistribution of wealth, housing and health care for all of our citizens.

6. How would you engage teachers, parents, the arts and cultural community, city agencies, and other interested stakeholders to expand access to arts education both in-school and outside of the school day?

We can start with a major public relations and education project to encourage or to get all of these elements to see how vital the arts are to the growth of our children.

Additional comments?

No additional comments.

**View all the responses from
candidates online at nycartsed.org!**