TURNAROUND:ARTS
creating success in schools

WHITE HOUSE COMMITTEE SELECTS FINDLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOR PRESTIGIOUS ARTS INITIATIVE TO HELP TURN AROUND LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

Academy Award-winning actor Forest Whitaker to work in school as part of new program

Washington, DC, Monday April 23, 2012 (Embargoed 8:30 a.m. EST)—Today the Presidentôs Committee on the Arts and the Humanities announced that Findley Elementary School in Des Moines, Iowa has been selected to participate in a new arts education initiative to help turn around low-performing schools, developed in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education and the White House Domestic Policy Council. The Turnaround Arts initiative is a new public-private partnership designed to narrow the achievement gap and improve student engagement through the arts. Findley was chosen to be one of eight schools featured in the program through a highly competitive national selection process, and will receive intensive arts education resources, expertise and the involvement of high-profile Presidentôs Committee artists over the course of two years to support their educational reform effort.

ñThe Presidentôs Committee is delighted that the students of Findley Elementary under the inspired leadership of their principal, Tara Owen, will be participating in Turnaround Arts,ò said Margo Lion, Co-Chair of the Presidentôs Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. ñMs. Owen and her team have a dynamic new vision for Findley, which importantly includes the vital role of the creative arts to engaged learning and academic success. We look forward to helping their vision become a reality.ò

Turnaround Arts will work in eight elementary and middle ñturnaround schoolsò across the country—public schools in the lowest-achieving five percent of their state that are receiving School Improvement Grants through the U.S. Department of Education. An external evaluation will measure the impact and effectiveness of using rigorous and integrated arts education together with other educational reform efforts in high-poverty, low-performing schools.

"We are so proud of Findley for being selected for this program, adding arts to the recipe of success for our students," said Governor Branstad. "The PCAH initiative will be an invaluable resource for Principal Owen and the good work she and her team are doing at their school."

Three studies released this month by the Council on Foreign Relations, the Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Arts emphasized the importance of access to arts education, citing better grades, increased creativity, higher rates of college enrollment and graduation as well as higher aspirations and civic engagement. Research shows that when students participate in the arts they are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, have higher GPAs and SAT scores and show significantly higher levels of mathematics proficiency by grade 12. They are also more likely to be engaged and cooperative with teachers and peers and are more self-confident and better able to express their ideas. These benefits are particularly pronounced in high-poverty, low-performing schools.

ñWe are excited to be one of eight schools in the nation selected for this prestigious program,òsaid Tara Owen, Principal, Findley Elementary School. ñTurnaround Arts will help Findley continue to move toward success, not only by focusing on essential content skills, but by focusing on increasing learning through highly engaging arts experiences that connect back to core content.ò

As part of the program, the Presidentôs Committee and its partners will provide training and resources to Findley and the other participating schools, including an Aspen Institute summer leadership program, in-school professional development, partnerships with community arts education and cultural organizations, art supplies and musical instruments and community engagement events. Presidentially-appointed artists on the Committee, Chuck Close, Sarah Jessica Parker, Kerry Washington, Forest Whitaker, Yo-Yo Ma, Damian Woetzel and Alfre Woodard, will ñadoptòone of the selected schools for the length of the program, working with the schools and communities and highlighting their successes.

ñWorking with Findley Elementary School over the next two years will be an honoròsaid Forest Whitaker, Academy Award winning actor, PCAH member and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Peace and Reconciliation. ñWeôve all seen the power of the arts to transform the lives of individual students, and create an engaging place to learn for everyone. For the last decade I have dedicated myself to the cause of child soldiers and young victims of civil wars. The arts offer opportunities of achievement for all kids and are crucial in the integration and rehabilitation process. Findleyôs education program resonates very much with my commitment and I look forward to contributing to this remarkable initiative.ò

The partners in Turnaround Arts include the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ford Foundation, the Herb Alpert Foundation, Crayola, NAMM Foundation, the Aspen Institute and Booz Allen Hamilton. Inktel and SKDKnickerbocker are providing additional support and resources. Turnaround Arts is being run and managed by the Arts Education Partnership, a national coalition administered by the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education.

Participating schools were competitively selected from nominations by state and municipal authorities. In addition to being recipients of a School Improvement Grant, criteria for selection included demonstrated need and opportunity, strong school leadership with district support and a commitment to arts education. Turnaround Arts schools represent elementary and middle schools from across the country and encompass a diversity of student demographics and urban and rural settings. They are:

(1) Batiste Cultural Arts Academy at Live Oak School in New Orleans, LA (PK–8)
(2) Findley Elementary School in Des Moines, IA (PK–5)
(3) Lame Deer Jr. High School in Lame Deer, MT (7,8)
(4) Noel Community Arts School in Denver, CO (6,7)
(5) Orchard Gardens K-8 School in Boston, MA (K–8)
(6) Savoy Elementary School in Washington, DC (PK–5)
(7) Martin Luther King Jr. School in Portland, OR (K–8)
(8) Roosevelt School in Bridgeport, CT (K–8)

More information about the TAI and profiles of selected schools can be found here: http://turnaroundarts.pcah.gov (no www.)

More information about the PCAH can be found at www.pcah.gov

For more information or to schedule interviews, please contact Jody Arlington jodyarlington@mac.com, 202.316.4316 or Rachel Racusen at RRacusen@skdknick.com, 202.464.6616.

About the President's Committee on The Arts and The Humanities

Created in 1982 under President Reagan, the Presidentõs Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) is an advisory committee to the White House on cultural issues. The PCAH works directly with the three primary cultural agenciesð National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Institute of Museum and Library Servicesð as well as other federal partners and the private sector, to address policy questions in the arts and humanities, to initiate and support key programs in those disciplines and to recognize excellence in the field. Its core areas of focus are education, cultural exchange, and creative economy. Under the leadership of the First Lady and Honorary Chairman, and through the efforts of its federal and private members, the Presidentõs Committee has compiled an impressive legacy over its tenure, conducting major research and policy analysis, and catalyzing important federal cultural programs, both domestic and international.