

EDUCATIONAL TESTING SERVICE

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

08540

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

November 8, 1978

Miss Margery Craig, Executive Director  
American Association for Gifted Children  
15 Gramarcy Park  
New York, NY 10013

Dear Miss Craig:

For several years Educational Testing Service has had under study the question as to whether we might play a role in stimulating interest in and support of the arts in education among secondary schools, public and private. After extensive discussion with schools, art associations, state arts councils, and knowledgeable individuals in the art world, we have concluded that there is a role and have sketched out the concepts for a National Merit Awards Program in the Arts. As we now envision it, this would focus on the cultivation and recognition of artistic excellence and literacy among secondary school students, and a careful analysis of ongoing programs that have been successful both at secondary and elementary levels. We are sharing with you a still evolving draft proposal, at its September 1978 state, so you may see something of the potential organizational design.

Late in September, we called a small meeting on the Recognition and Cultivation of Talent and Literacy in the Arts with several foundation executives, government officials and colleagues from eighteen professional associations in attendance. The latter had been invited to join with ETS in program cosponsorship. The counsel we received from this interested and interesting group is reflected in changed plans as shown in the three briefs. We were also encouraged to broaden the basis of cosponsorship by addition of five associations, among them yours.

A commitment from the American Association for Gifted Children to be a cosponsor for the National Merit Awards Program in the Arts would reflect support of the basic conception of the program, but would place it under no financial obligation. Cosponsors will be involved in possible revisions of the initial design, in subsequent planning, and in guiding the development of the program during its first two years. Their representatives will sit on an ad hoc steering committee which will be organized as the primary source of advice and counsel as soon as first funding has been secured. The steering committee will meet at regular intervals throughout the early years.

If in two years the program meets with sufficient success, the steering committee will guide an effort leading to the establishment of a national consortium for achievement of excellence in the arts. Assuming this positive eventuality, the ad hoc group will evolve into a standing steering committee of the consortium to guide the development and destiny of a national artistic merit program, in part modeled after the National Merit Scholarships. These factors are dealt with in greater detail at pages 12-18 of the proposal. Beyond advice and counsel, cosponsors will be given the opportunity to cooperate in various aspects of the program activity, where their resources and contacts might be uniquely helpful in carrying out program objectives. If we maintain our proposed schedule, we shall announce the program mid-1979.

The purpose of this letter, therefore, is to invite the American Association for Gifted Children to join with us as a cosponsor in this effort to organize and launch this exciting program. Lists of cosponsors and of potential cosponsors are enclosed.

We appreciate that some groups may have to move the consideration through a decision-making process that will take some time. Whatever may be appropriate for you, we will be willing to aid and to work with you in the final decision.

Wesley Walton, Program Administrator, will call in a week or so to learn of your initial reaction to this prospect, and what we might do to help advance its consideration.

I am very enthusiastic about this exciting new program, and hope that the American Association for Gifted Children will give serious and favorable consideration to joining with us in this venture.

Sincerely yours,



William W. Turnbull  
President

WWT:df

Enclosures: Proposal in September Draft  
List of Cosponsors  
List of Potential Cosponsors  
Three Briefs dated September and October 1978 (3 of each)

NATIONAL MERIT AWARDS PROGRAM IN THE ARTS

CO-SPONSORSHIP

It presently appears that the associations listed below will join with Educational Testing Service in co-sponsorship of the National Merit Awards Program in the Arts. In several cases, executive committees or boards have not yet formally considered the question, and those association commitments are therefore still tentative.

American Council for the Arts

American Theatre Association

College Art Association

Educational Records Bureau

Music Educators National Conference

National Association of Community Arts Agencies

National Art Education Association

National Association of Elementary School Principals

National Association of Independent Schools

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

National Association of Schools of Art

National Association of Schools of Music

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Catholic Educational Association

National Dance Association

National Council of Teachers of English

National Guild for Community Schools for the Arts

Educational Testing Service  
Princeton, New Jersey  
October, 1978

NATIONAL MERIT AWARDS PROGRAM IN THE ARTS

Nominees for Co-Sponsorship

As a result of discussions during the Art Talent Recognition Conference held at Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey on September 24-26, 1978, invitations are to be issued to the following associations to join in co-sponsorship in the National Merit Awards Program in the Arts.

American Association for Gifted Children

American Association of School Administrators

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

Commission on Presidential Scholars

Council for Exceptional Children

Educational Testing Service  
Princeton, New Jersey  
October 27, 1978

## NATIONAL MERIT AWARDS PROGRAM IN THE ARTS

### What Might Cosponsorship Entail?

1. Cosponsorship will reflect support of the basic concepts of the program and continuing interest in helping to guide its development, but not a blanket endorsement concerning its every detail.
2. There will be no financial obligations, but direct participation helping to secure needed funds from a variety of fund sources will be most welcome.
3. Cosponsors will be encouraged to suggest revisions of the program's design, and to make association views clear on issues related to how the program unfolds.
4. Each cosponsor will designate a representative who will sit on an ad hoc steering committee to help guide the program through its early years. Travel and accommodation expenses will be reimbursed, and honoraria will be granted. The committee will have its first meeting as soon as initial funding is arranged, probably during fall 1978.
5. Each cosponsor will designate one or more representatives who will sit on ad hoc task forces charged by the steering committee to undertake specific tasks. Travel and accommodation expenses will be reimbursed, but honoraria probably will not be granted. Five task forces are expected to be active in 1978-79. A given association may be asked to designate representatives to at least one but not more than three task forces.
6. After the early years, representatives of cosponsors wishing to continue will form the nucleus of a national consortium for excellence in the arts.
7. Each continuing cosponsor will designate a representative to serve on a standing steering committee of the consortium to guide the further development and longer-term destiny of the National Merit Awards Program in the Arts.
8. Cosponsors will be joined by other cosponsors as determinations are made concerning the efficacy of such actions.

This statement, and accompanying briefs, have been prepared to help board members of invited associations in their considerations related to participation as a cosponsor. Association executives are invited to duplicate the material to meet their needs or to secure additional copies from Wesley W. Walton (3101) or John A. Winterbottom (2953) at (609)921-9000.

Educational Testing Service  
Princeton, New Jersey  
September, 1978

National Merit Awards  
Program in the Arts

Educational Testing Service (ETS) proposes to enter agreements with appropriate educational and arts associations in the cosponsorship and conduct of a National Merit Awards Program in the Arts, announcing the program in Spring 1979 with first recognitions and awards to be made in Spring 1980. The multiple purpose will be to stimulate aesthetic awareness and promote high artistic attainment, especially among students at the secondary school level, and in the major contemporary art forms. Participation will be sought and both program recognition and individual awards will be given to acknowledge high-order accomplishment in the dance, music, theatre, the visual arts, and writing.

The program envisioned, and its component parts, will be organized during 1978-79 under the aegis of a National Steering Committee made up of cosponsors and concerned individuals in the arts. Technical, administrative, and research leadership will be provided by ETS. Detailed evaluation and program plans will be formulated by ETS staff working with five task forces (one for each major art form) acting as sub-groups of the Steering Committee. The charge to each task force, which will be developed by the Steering Committee, will include at least the following items: (1) develop and specify for its art form criteria or standards against which high-order accomplishment might be judged, and (2) outline methods and procedures by which the judging might be done. One focus of this work will be upon what is announced to young people -- and to their teachers -- that will help them decide whether or not to enter the program. A second focus will be upon how an economical and cost-effective national system can be organized and operated to facilitate, compile, and express professional judgments on the quality of artistic accomplishments.

The task forces will be made up of representatives from the associations which serve the specific interests and concerns of the respective art forms (e.g. the National Dance Association for the dance), and individuals able to represent the interests of education and the arts from other points of view (e.g. National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of Community Arts Agencies).

"Phasing in" the individual art forms will be conditioned upon the feasibility of plans developed in the task forces, and the general availability of funding. The extent to which the funding secured is categorical will also be a factor. If both feasible plans and sufficient funds are forthcoming, a program for all of the arts will be introduced at the outset. An alternate may be a staggered program of introduction, if more time is needed in one art form or another to evolve appropriate criteria and the judging procedures for their application, and if more limited funds are secured. It is possible that funds might become available for underwriting a specified art form. Such a successful occurrence obviously would effect the time table. If components need to be "phased in" serially, the proposed means for accomplishing that will be reviewed by the Steering Committee in plenary session, with the expectation that the welfare of the program as a whole will guide the decisions on the "phasing in" process.

National Merit Awards Program in the Arts  
Prime Objectives and Characteristics

The specific objectives of the National Merit Awards Program in the Arts are as follows:

Identification and Recognition of Individual Artistic Accomplishment: The most important aspect of the program will concern the identification and recognition of proven artistic ability through the evaluation and display of portfolios of individual artists representative of high level attainment over time. The means of recognizing artistic excellence will include but not be limited to awards resembling those of the National Merit Scholarship Program for excellence in the more traditional subjects.

Identification and Recognition of Effective Programs: The artistic ability of gifted individuals is nurtured best in an art-intensive educational environment. Moreover, such an environment provides all students with opportunities for becoming familiar with the arts and for learning how to become open to artistic experience. Such opportunity should be universally available. To encourage schools to provide this kind of environment, instructional programs that seem to be particularly effective will be identified and given special recognition. Further, effective methodologies will be sought for disseminating information about these programs to those who can make good use of the information.

Improvement of Evaluation and Judging Procedures: As individual accomplishment and effective programs are being identified through existing procedures for evaluation of excellence in the arts, steps will be taken to improve those evaluation procedures. Because artistic accomplishment is not as well understood as academic accomplishment, and its methods for evaluation and assessment not as well developed, presently available procedures must be improved through various means before their use can be broadly applied.

Research: The proposed program will stimulate research on: (1) the nature of artistic achievement; (2) ways in which artistic productivity and understanding might be fostered; and (3) the development of a variety of assessment techniques for the identification and evaluation of artistic processes and products. Moreover, the program will be designed to include periodic surveys of accomplishment in art education within American schools.

The key component of the program, identification and recognition of individual artistic accomplishment, will be open to participation on a school basis. Each secondary school will be supplied criterion-related

- A reading by authors of award-winning works in the language arts at a room such as Alice Tully Hall in the Lincoln Center
- A book using four-color printing carrying photographs of award-winning works in the fine and graphic arts
- One or more records as a show case for award-winners in music
- One or more public performances as a show case for award-winners in music, the dance, and theatre
- An attractive anthology of writing selected for awards
- A book for distribution to opportunity sources (sources of help in advancing career or educational plans) under the title:  
A Roster of Youth Accomplished in the Arts.

Educational Testing Service  
Princeton, New Jersey

October 9, 1978