



### **Maurice (Mo) Green Responses**

#### **Your Music and Arts Story**

1) **Has music or the arts had an impact on your personal or professional life?**

I could share many stories about my appreciation for the arts and music. I was blessed to have participated in various arts endeavors in school and college. As examples, I played "Scrooge" in a rendition of "The Christmas Carol" when I was in elementary school, acted as an old man in my Senior Play in high school, and was a dancer in a rendition of the musical "Kiss Me Kate" while in college. I wasn't a very good performer, but I had a great time, nonetheless. I was also blessed to be able to attend various plays, musicals and concerts as a youth.

That exposure created a foundation for my lifelong appreciation for the arts. I still enjoy attending various plays, concerts and musicals. I have also tried to support the arts through my professional life. Here are two examples:

- When I was Superintendent of Guilford County Schools, I led the development of a summer arts academy which was modeled after a similar academy I was introduced to when I worked with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Specifically, in July 2010, we launched the Guilford County Schools Summer Arts Institute (SAI). It offered a variety of arts options, including band, orchestra, chorus, visual art, dance and theatre. Students were a part of productions from "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" to "Shakespeare in the Park." During my tenure, thousands of students participated in the program. There were many community collaborations with Greensboro City Arts, the Community Theater of Greensboro, the High Point Theatre, and more. The SAI was an initiative that was a core component of GCS's 2012 Strategic Plan and had much success, expanding arts opportunities for students across the district, even this summer.
- When I was Executive Director of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, a philanthropic organization that seeks to improve the quality of life for North Carolinians, we launched an "Inclusive Public Art" initiative in 2018. This initiative included awards to partners in ten communities from across the state. One guiding premise was this: "inclusive public art can catalyze community conversations that result in a shared and fuller understanding of our common history — and common bonds — as North Carolinians." The initiative funded art projects from Roanoke Rapids to Hickory, Winston-Salem to Greenville, Robbinsville to Wilmington, among several others. The art spotlighted contributions of women and people of color, whose stories were often not told. Now local residents can come together to appreciate the pieces of art and to reflect on how the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of our communities make them better.



Both of these experiences, and many more, were moving experiences to be a part of, and they reaffirmed for me the significant impact of the arts. Our public schools and state are better when we invest in music and the arts.

- 2) **Do you believe music and the arts are an integral part of the education of North Carolina's students?**

Yes, I believe that music and the arts are an integral part of the education of North Carolina's public school students.

The following is just one example of why I think music and the arts are integral to the education of NC public school students. North Carolina's public schools educate more than 1.3 million students. Our schools are growing more and more diverse in terms of race, language, and nationality. Collectively, North Carolina's students speak over 380 different languages. Our students and schools are incredibly diverse, and they are growing in their diversity. Music and the arts are powerful forces that create understanding of our differences, and therefore our strengths. It also has the power to unite us together. By collaborating within a school band, attending a local performance on a field trip, or listening to lyrics of a classmate's composed song, North Carolina's students practice collaboration, empathy, and communication skills. All of these are critical for being prepared for whatever path they choose after high school.

### **Advocacy for Arts Education**

- 3) **Through your professional journey are you aware of instances where music and the arts have brought meaningful support or change to a student or school community?**

In my answer to question 1, I noted a couple of examples of where music and the arts brought meaningful support and change to students and communities. I could list others; however, suffice it to say that I have witnessed the transformative power of the arts throughout my professional career. I especially saw the incredible influence in our school communities when I was General Counsel, Chief Operating Officer, and then Deputy Superintendent in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, and also when I was Superintendent of Guilford County Schools.

In addition, I led a philanthropic organization in North Carolina that supports public education and has served on numerous boards dealing with a host of educational issues including homelessness, athletics, policy, media, arts and community support. I will also note that I was the board secretary and a member for the Community School of the Arts in Charlotte (now Arts+). That organization has "served the Charlotte community with the goal of making outstanding arts education accessible to students of all backgrounds and socioeconomic levels." I strongly believe in these community partnerships between local organizations and our public schools.



- 4) **Are you willing to support music and arts education in our schools with all resources possible as our State Superintendent of Public Instruction?**

I believe that the North Carolina public school system is woefully underfunded and must receive significant increases in funding. Our state is, sadly, already 48th in the nation in funding for public education and its educators are woefully underpaid, making it extremely challenging for our state to meet its constitutional mandate to provide a system of free public schools where all students can receive a sound, basic education.

Even under these circumstances, we must further commit ourselves to providing excellent music and arts education in our schools. I strongly support music and arts education and would do so if elected as State Superintendent of Public Instruction. I will continue to advocate for the provision of more resources to achieve our goal. This commitment is not new, as I supported the maintenance and expansion of music and arts education while Superintendent of Guilford County Schools, even during the Great Recession era.

- 5) **Would you be willing to share any current or future initiatives that support music and the arts in our schools that have caught your attention?**

During my tenure at Guilford County Schools, I saw many examples of initiatives that positively supported music and the arts. As noted above, the Summer Arts Institute in Guilford County Schools is an initiative that has been noteworthy for me. Specifically, in July 2010, we launched the Guilford County Schools Summer Arts Institute (SAI). It offered a variety of arts options, including band, orchestra, chorus, visual art, dance and theatre. Students were a part of productions from “Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory” to “Shakespeare in the Park.” During my tenure, thousands of students participated in the program. There were many community collaborations with Greensboro City Arts, the Community Theater of Greensboro, the High Point Theatre, and more. It was an initiative that was a core component of GCS’s 2012 Strategic Plan and had much success, expanding arts opportunities for students across the district.

The SAI continues today. Indeed, many music and arts education initiatives in GCS including the SAI program, have resulted in the district receiving numerous national awards for its arts education programs.

On a personal note, one of my most treasured items from my time at Guilford County Schools was a special gift presented at my last school board meeting: a piece of artwork painted and presented by then Northern High School Advanced Placement Art student Caroline Farrell. It was a testament to the individual students in our individual classrooms in our individual schools who create and make positive contributions to our state.

### **Curriculum Integration**



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A key component of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is the enumeration of music and the arts as core academic subjects. Promoting a "well rounded education" is a keystone in several funding documents.

- 6) **In your role as State Superintendent of Public Instruction, what measures will you take to ensure music continues to be effectively integrated in the curriculum of our school communities?**

I would work with the State Board of Education, the staff at the Department of Public Instruction, local district and school leaders, the General Assembly and others so that they understand the importance of investing in music and the arts for our public school students. In addition, we must continue to make music and the arts more effectively integrated in our public school curriculum.

As State Superintendent, I would also seek feedback from various stakeholders as the standard courses of study are updated and rewritten. I would welcome input from the NC Music Educators Association on this matter. Seeking feedback is core to how I operate, as I listen, learn and then lead. Starting when I was Superintendent of GCS, that way of operating became a brand called "Mo Wants to Know."

### **Access and Equity**

There is very clear data that supports students who are involved in music and the arts demonstrate significantly higher graduation rates than their peers. In May 2024 the Georgia Department of Education released data that the graduation rate of Georgia students who are involved in the Fine Arts Career Pathways is an astonishing 97.35%.

We know that often a barrier to student participation in music and the arts centers around their geographic location or their socioeconomic status.

- 7) **As State Superintendent, how will you ensure that all of our students have access to high-quality music and arts instruction in our schools?**

I have experience bringing together stakeholders to ensure students have access to high-quality music and arts instruction. I will continue to advocate for that if I am elected to be State Superintendent.

During my tenure as Superintendent of Guilford County Schools, my team and I were able to grow arts programs and opportunities for students during a time in which many other districts made difficult decisions to cut the arts.

It required a tenacious commitment to prioritizing the arts and protecting funding for these programs when other districts were making cuts in these areas.

### **Support for Educators**

In an ever-changing world, we know that it is critical our teachers have access to professional development opportunities that are content driven and filled with the best practices and resources for their content.

- 8) **How do you plan to support music and arts educators' professional learning needs?**



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Throughout my career and campaign, I have heard a similar sentiment: North Carolina’s educators deserve better pay and more respect. We need to stop subjecting classrooms to manufactured culture wars and instead focus on what really matters: student academic excellence and school staff support, including for our music and arts educators. I wholeheartedly agree with that sentiment.

Indeed, one of my core campaign pillars is to “revere educators.” I have revered educators since I was young thanks to my mother. My mother was called to give back to those in need and became a special education teacher. In her classroom, she demanded excellence of her students, then celebrated all of their accomplishments: big and small. I have continued that reverence throughout my professional career.

We must return North Carolina to a state that reveres teachers. Teaching is a noble profession, but our state has woefully underpaid and consistently disrespected educators, including those in the music and arts. They are professionals, and I will advocate to provide the professional development opportunities accordingly. They play a pivotal role in our children’s lives, and we must pay them more and give them the appreciation they deserve.

### **Engagement with Professional Arts Associations**

We feel confident you know the value of relationship building and partnerships with agencies and partners that support students and teachers throughout North Carolina’s schools.

- 9) **What ways can the State Superintendent engage with associations, like the NC Music Educators Association, to collaborate and grow music and arts education with deeper roots and a broader reach?**

I am generally known as one who listens and tries to bring communities together to achieve remarkable things on behalf of students. For example, after becoming the superintendent of Guilford County Schools, I heard from thousands of stakeholders during a listening tour known as “Mo Wants to Know.”

After listening, I studied, developed and led the implementation of the district’s first two strategic plans—Achieving Education Excellence, resulting in notable gains in graduation rates and academic achievement and state and national recognitions for academic performance, character development/service learning and the arts. Today, Guilford County Schools has some of the best schools in the state and the country.

I will continue this listening & learning process as I campaign for State Superintendent, and hopefully, shall I be elected to the position. I would be grateful to continue my engagement with the NC Music Educators Association. I appreciate your vision of “leading North Carolina in music education, empowering generations to create, perform and respond to music.” I also appreciate your mission to “advance music education by promoting the understanding and making of music by all.” In that mission, I believe two key words are “by all.” The arts have the power to reach *every child* in our school buildings, and I believe in our communities as well.