

Dear TCA Arts Respond Panel,

My name is Phillip Taylor and I am the Director of Fine Arts for the Austin Independent School District. It is my distinct pleasure and honor to highly recommend Austin Classical Guitar (ACG) for grant opportunities.

Austin ISD provides fine arts instruction and extra-curricular programs to over 55,000 students. However, as a large urban school district, we face many challenges in securing consistent funding for instructional support in fine arts classrooms. Fortunately, a partnership between AISD and Austin Classical Guitar continues to close the equity and access gap for our most marginalized students and teachers. ACG provides guitar lessons to hundreds of students, provides instruments to schools and students, and coordinates several districtwide music events, such as Concert & Sight Reading Evaluations. Additionally, they provide summer professional development and curriculum opportunities to new Austin ISD guitar teachers and elementary music teachers. This high-quality professional development opportunity trains teachers on best practices for a guitar classroom. ACG regularly checks in with guitar teachers across the district and often substitutes for, or, co-teaches with struggling teachers. Additionally, ACG assists in recruiting for teacher vacancies in our school district.

The partnership with ACG has yielded tremendous results in recruitment and retention. Austin ISD's guitar enrollment has grown tremendously and we firmly believe that is a direct result of Austin Classical Guitar. Guitar is now the second largest music program on Austin ISD high school and middle school campuses (first is band, followed in third with orchestra, and fourth with choir). This growth has garnered district wide attention, as guitar courses now play a large role in the new educational specifications and master plan for the school district. AISD passed a bond in November 2022 and, as we modernize or build new campuses, guitar classrooms will be added to (or enlarged) at each of the secondary campuses. Not only does this partnership expand interest in the arts, but it provides an affordable instrument option for students interested in becoming a musician, removing one of the many barriers that exist for students to participate in the arts.

Through our partnership, ACG and AISD will continue to work collaboratively to close the equity and access gap that exists across the district and city.

I highly recommend Austin Classical Guitar for consideration of Texas Commission on the Arts grant opportunities. Please feel free to reach out if you have any additional questions.

Best,



**Phillip Taylor**

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