

September 1, 2013

Dear Superintendent Torlakson:

We want to thank you for broadening education in California and welcoming a multicultural approach to teaching history-social science. Students who know about peoples in different times and places learn to appreciate diversity and the values of tolerance and acceptance. The opportunity to reinforce these educational goals is present with the touring of the ancient artifact known as the Cyrus Cylinder. It is rare for the Cylinder to be on display outside of its home at the British Museum, but now it is making its way through only five major U.S. cities, two of which are located in California (please see www.cyruscylinder2013.com). This ancient artifact is the proclamation that Cyrus the Great, ruler of the Achaemenid Empire, wrote when he conquered Babylon in 539 BCE. Because the cuneiform text of this ancient proclamation appears to take into account the religious diversity of Babylon's numerous inhabitants, Cyrus is seen to be the earliest ruler who advocated religious toleration. This respect for local religions and cultures repeats itself throughout his reign, winning him praise from his friends and enemies alike. "Cyrus is the only foreign ruler who is referred to in the Bible in laudatory terms," according to Professor Emeritus David Stronach in a recent speech to welcome the Cylinder.

The present tour gives students in Californian schools an opportunity to engage in conversations about cultural inclusivity against the backdrop of this significant object and the style of leadership it represents. The Asian Art Museum in San Francisco and the Getty Villa in Los Angeles will host this unique symbol of the ancient world for a short period of time this year. We urge you to recommend to school districts that they take advantage of this unique opportunity and encourage their students to visit the exhibition of the respective museum at the appropriate time—San Francisco Asian Art Museum (August 9-September 22, 2013) and the Getty Villa (October 2-December 2, 2013) and make use of the educational programs they have to offer.

Please encourage teachers to visit the Asian Art Museum's online resources (education.asianart.org) to learn more about Cyrus the Great, his Cylinder, and his legacy. The Getty Villa also has a number of educational tools on the web which will be enabled after September 16th of this year (<http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/index.html> and http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/student_resources/index.html).

Thanks again for your continued strive for educational excellence in the State of California.

Asian Art Museum



The Getty Villa



History Advocates



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