

ARTS EDUCATION: MOBILIZING A COMMITMENT TO ACTION ACTION STRATEGIES

Advocacy/Policy

Pursuit of Funding: Securing Appropriations for Arts Education

1. Identify those key decision-makers—state legislators, school board members, business leaders—that have championed for arts education. Lobby their colleagues for votes and support.
2. Construct policy/legislative language that includes a definition of arts education (visual arts, dance, theater, and music) for all children. Use it consistently.
3. Seek sustained categorical support—formulas or percentages—for arts education within education funding mechanisms, so that dollars hard won can't be easily eliminated.
4. Articulate what a quality arts education program looks like to increase understanding throughout the education, cultural, and community sectors.
5. Take advantage of opportunities to pursue funding. Be vocal.
6. To sustain funding, invite legislators, decision-makers, and parents to observe positive classroom practices.
7. Encourage parents to be active on behalf of their children.
8. Leverage cuts as a strategic opportunity to put decision-makers on the spot, and resist cuts based on public sentiment.
9. Monitor all policy and funding developments as a unified community, ready to act in a timely manner with the facts.
10. Encourage all organizations to budget and plan for their advocacy work.

Advocacy/Policy

Pursuit of Change: Building the Capacity of School Districts

1. Create active partnerships among arts councils; offices of education; and other local, state, and national networks.
2. Identify school districts that are ready to engage in creating systemic change.
3. Work with districts to create an arts task force with stakeholders in which you:
 - a. provide professional development to build community buy-in and consensus in the design and creation of an arts education program.
 - b. provide flexible, customized technical assistance to the task force to develop arts education policies and plans.
 - c. conduct a needs assessment with the school, district, and/or task force. Use data from the needs assessment to develop arts policy and plan.
4. Work with districts to create a diversified portfolio of funding for arts education.
5. Work with districts to adopt standards-based arts curricula.
6. Ensure quality leadership and staffing to coordinate efforts among all stakeholders.
7. Demonstrate arts education process and results to elected officials.

Partnerships and Collaborations

The Benefit of Successful Relationships

1. Establish benchmarks to measure and evaluate the success of your partnership during its various stages.
2. Clearly outline the expectations for all partners at the outset and don't be afraid to dissolve an unsuccessful partnership.
3. Identify those people who can have the most benefit to your organization and build relationships with them.
4. Stay true to your mission, but take advantage of opportunities as they arise.
5. If you encounter challenges, seek advice from others who have had success in that area.
6. Create a commitment at the policy level for all partnering organizations.
7. Successful partnerships have quality and qualified leadership.

8. Plan. Take time to clarify roles and identify outcome goals.
9. Create a template for your partnership that can be replicated and expanded upon by others.
10. Create contracts, letters of agreement, and memos of understanding among partners to avoid confusion and misunderstanding.

Assessment

Building a Commitment to Quality Arts Assessment

1. Conduct an assessment informed by the standards.
2. Build a culture of acceptance of standards-based assessment.
3. Provide and use assessment tools and examples such as
 - a. teacher training protocols.
 - b. examples of authentic assessment.
 - c. examples of student learning and student work.
 - d. research on arts assessment to drive the field.
4. Use assessment as a pedagogical tool
 - a. for instruction that addresses higher-level thinking skills.
 - b. that informs projects and grants.
 - c. that clarifies the arts as curricula.
5. Use assessment for political/advocacy goals to
 - a. clarify the importance of arts curricula to the community.
 - b. enable decision-makers to support arts curricula.
 - c. inform all that No Child Left Behind funds are available to the arts as a core academic subject and seek flexible funding sources.

Standards

Supporting Arts Academic Achievement Standards

1. Standards are a living set of guidelines. They are a manifestation of our thinking and provide a place from which to grow and improve.
2. For standards to remain relevant, continuous professional development at all levels—preservice and in-services for arts and nonarts teachers and teaching artists—is needed.

3. Develop a correlation of standards across disciplines.
4. Create a searchable database of standards and benchmarks for use by educators and all constituents.
5. Include the arts as an indicator in the state report card.
6. Provide a copy of the standards for all professional development programs.
7. Design a family guide to standards that helps parents and families better understand the role of the arts in a quality education.
8. Accountability to parents—add “informance” to student performances as a way to help parents understand the academic and artistic relevance of the performance activity.
9. Develop inclusive community arts planning teams that lead long-range planning—include training in arts standards and facilitation training.
10. Provide weekly e-mail updates—on issues, opportunities, meetings, etc.—to school administrators on the work of the state board of education, department of education, state arts agency, and state legislature.

Evaluation and Research

Using Research to Improve and Inform Arts Education

1. Create an evaluation that allows the appropriate time to obtain sound evidence.
2. Make the process of assessment—one that is followed by documentation, followed by action—an ongoing process for programs.
3. Synthesize your findings/evidence in language appropriate for the audience you want to inform.
4. Engage all “players” in the research/evaluation process.
5. Use materials/information produced in your research/evaluation for public documentation and presentation.
6. Determine what the “essential questions” are first—and undertake a backward design process.
7. When scientific study is not feasible, make use of concurrent experience and/or those experiences that can be contrasted.

8. Create partnerships that can build on the current knowledge already completed by the field.

Professional Development

Improving the Art of Professional Development

1. Start the planning process early.
2. Focus on a vision of successful achievement.
3. Maintain flexibility to customize standards for different audiences.
4. Know the needs of the audience and the schools.
5. Sustain partnership efforts and relationships over time.
6. Use research-based practice to focus philosophy and to guide implementation.
7. Acknowledge the basic needs of adult learners: food, fun, and finances.
8. Remember to emphasize the follow-through after the workshop or in subsequent training.