

Key Arts Education Issues

Topic: Advocacy and Policy

Vision: All K–12 students are required to study all the arts as core subjects. This vision is endorsed and supported by policymakers and community leaders, who provide the resources needed to have highly qualified educators (individual arts specialists, classroom teachers, and teaching artists) teach and assess student learning in and through the arts. Local, state, and national organizations all play critical and complementary roles in advancing this vision.

Context: Research shows that having an effective community voice advocating for arts education makes the difference in expanding the role of the arts for young people both in and out of school. School districts accomplish their mandate when they develop and adopt long-range master plans to provide sequential, standards-based arts instruction districtwide and appropriate a specified percentage of a school district's budget to in-school arts education.

Questions: How are local and state arts education leaders working together to provide technical assistance to school districts and their partners to build capacity to adopt, implement, and fund arts education policies?

How are we nurturing and coordinating local, state, and national advocacy efforts to ensure adequate funding and widespread adoption of policies that support arts education?

How do we ensure that the arts are incorporated into core graduation requirements?

How do advocates best secure funding for arts education, including full implementation for curriculum and assessment?

How do we best secure understanding, recognition, and support for the investment of community-based organizations' role as arts education providers and collaborators?

Resources: *No Subject Left Behind: A Guide to Arts Education Opportunities in the 2001 NCLB Act* serves as a guide for state and local arts and education leaders to learn more about the federal No Child Left Behind Act and the multiple opportunities for arts education. It provides a brief overview of the legislation, including where to find specific references to the arts, descriptions of individual programs with arts-specific examples that have received funding, and links to websites for additional information. Updated in 2004.
www.aep-arts.org/PDF%20Files/NoSubjectLeftBehind.pdf

Allies, Arguments and Actions: Making a Case for Arts Education Advocacy, Americans for the Arts *Monograph*, Volume 3, Number 1, May 1999. This primer includes 10 advocacy tips, ideas about connecting arts education research with advocating for quality arts education, and successful models of local advocacy for arts education.
www.AmericansForTheArts.org/bookstore

Topic: Partnerships and Collaborations

Vision: Collaborating organizations establish sound and mutually beneficial partnerships that ensure effective and sustainable arts education policies, funding, and programming.

Context: Successful partnerships and collaborations positively affect the students and communities they serve. Wide ranging in scope, partnerships are a proven method for furthering arts education at all levels because we can accomplish more together than separately. Hallmarks of excellence in partnerships include shared vision, pooled resources, trust, open communication, and clearly defined responsibilities.

Questions: What can we learn from an in-depth exploration of specialized partnerships between arts programs and community-based organizations, and how can we use this knowledge to leverage systemic change?

How can we sustain partnerships for long-term impact given diverse geographic and cultural challenges?

How can we leverage what we have learned to be more effective as a field, and to have greater reach and impact?

What strategies can we use to encourage even more collaboration in the arts in education and school improvement?

Resources: *For the Greater Good: A Framework for Advancing State Arts Education Partnerships*, issued by NASAA in 2003, serves as a potential road map for states interested in advancing their own arts education relationships among state arts agencies, state alliances for arts education, and state departments of education.
www.nasaa-arts.org/publications/GreaterGood.doc

Cultural Collaborations: Building Partnerships for Arts Participation, written by Francie Ostrower and published by the Urban Institute in 2003, examines different types of partnerships—such as those between large and small organizations and cross-ethnic partnerships—and different uses of partnership—such as expanding artistic programming and engaging new audiences.
www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310616_CulturalCollaborations.pdf

YouthARTS Online Toolkit gives arts agencies, juvenile justice agencies, social service organizations, and other community-based organizations detailed information about how to plan, run, provide training, and evaluate arts programs for at-risk youth.
www.AmericansForTheArts.org/youtharts/index.asp

Arts Programs: Positive Alternatives for At-Risk Youth presents statistical, case study, and concluding material about at-risk youth arts programs in cities across the United States. Citing encouraging results from more than a dozen programs, this resource shows how arts programming is being effectively used to address the high-risk factors facing our youth. www.AmericansForTheArts.org/bookstore

Learning Partnerships: Improving Learning in Schools with Arts Partners in the Community, prepared by the Arts Education Partnership at the request of the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Arts, offers partnership guidance to community leaders from the arts, education, business, civic, and government communities that benefit young people. <http://aep-arts.org/LP/LPindex.html>

Topic: **Assessment**

Vision: Students experience a wide range of authentic assessment measures that enable them to demonstrate the breadth of their learning in the arts. Authentic assessment, both qualitative and quantitative, leads to improved understanding of the role of the arts in learning.

Context: Illustrating the value of assessment to stakeholders will help secure a commitment by decision-makers to fund ongoing authentic assessment. The arts serve as an excellent tool for assessment of student achievement and teacher practices in other subject areas as well.

Questions: How can a review of models—both successful and unsuccessful—inform future assessment designs at both the state and local levels?

As an arts education community, how can we work with policymakers to develop and implement effective testing measures, especially in an environment of “high-stakes testing?”

Funding comprehensive, valid, and authentic assessment is a laborious and costly undertaking. How can we ensure that assessments designed to improve the quality of arts education are funded?

Resources: *Arts Education Assessment Framework for the 1997 National Assessment of Educational Progress* (NAEP) presents a broad view of how well America's students can respond to, create, and perform works of visual art, music, and theater. Although an assessment was developed for dance, it was not administered due to the lack of a suitable national sample. However, dance was field tested in grades four and eight in 1995, and grade 12 in 1997, along with music, theater, and visual arts. The next NAEP arts assessment is planned for 2007. <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/arts/>

Understanding by Design, written by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe and published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) in 1998, explores the importance of clear learning goals and the thoughtful alignment of goals, assessments, and learning activities. Introducing the idea of "backward design," Wiggins and McTighe familiarize educators with the ideas and materials that will enable them to create effective and engaging units of instruction. www.ascd.org/cms/index.cfm?TheViewID=363&flag=363

Envisioning Arts Assessment is a guide to help design large-scale arts assessment programs. It also provides informational support and activities. www.aep-arts.org/PDF%20Files/EnvArtsAssess.pdf

Measuring Up to the Challenge: What Standards and Assessment can do for Arts Education, edited by Ruth Mitchell in 1994, takes a detailed look at arts education issues as a basis for assessment policy. It describes assessment development and implementation and proposes policy directions for the future. www.AmericansForTheArts.org/bookstore

Topic: Standards

Vision: Policymakers provide resources and leadership to incorporate arts into K–12 education, curriculum frameworks, and course requirements to advance quality learning in and through the arts.

Context: The national arts education standards, adopted in 1994, outline content for what students should know and be able to do in visual arts, music, dance, and theater. Congress and the White House have included the arts in the definition of core academic subjects and 49 states have adopted standards for arts learning. (In Iowa, content standards are developed at the school district level. All Iowa school districts have arts standards.) Local school districts establish curriculum based on standards.

Questions: How are arts academic standards affecting curriculum and instruction in our schools?

What can we—as arts education leaders—do to support the use of state achievement standards in the arts?

Why haven't state standards resulted in more or better classroom instruction?

How do we ensure standards are actually implemented in K–12 classrooms, as well as in teacher education programs, throughout the country?

Resources: *National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts*, published by the National Association for Music Education (MENC) in 1994. The standards were developed by experts in education and the arts. They describe what a child with a complete, sequential education in the arts should know and be able to do at various grade levels in the artistic disciplines of dance, music, theater, and visual arts. The 1997 National Assessment for Educational Progress was developed in coordination with these national standards.

www.menc.org/publication/books/normalcatsrch.html

2003–2004 State Arts Education Policy Database allows you to search for State Arts Education Standards. www.aep-arts.org/policysearch/searchengine/

Adaptations of the National Visual Arts Standards, edited by Larry Peeno and published in 1995, is a vital resource for those teaching, redesigning, writing, planning, or assessing visual art curriculum.

www.naea-reston.org/publications-list.html#standards_for_art_education

Topic: Evaluation and Research

Vision: Community-based organizations, advocates, and educators at all levels understand and use relevant research to improve the policy and practice of arts education.

Context: Young people can be better prepared for life through quality learning experiences that involve the arts. Evaluation and research are the foundation, providing a definition of quality learning experiences, models that can be replicated across the country, and qualitative and quantitative data with which to make the case for resources and policies.

Questions: Why is research so important?

If we have the qualitative and quantitative research to prove that learning in and through the arts promotes educational excellence at all levels and for all students, why aren't all schools teaching the arts and using the arts to teach?

How do arts education advocates use existing research to encourage local communities and schools to build program content, support, and resources?

What are effective strategies for marketing research for different purposes to diverse audiences?

What are the appropriate and complementary roles of national, state, and local funders?

Resources: *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development*, published by the Arts Education Partnership in 2002, reviews 62 studies of arts learning in dance, drama, music, multiple arts, and visual arts. www.aep-arts.org/clinkspage.htm

Champions of Change: The Impact of Arts on Learning, published by the Arts Education Partnership in 1999, details seven research studies that examine learning in the arts, the relationship to other learning, and the impact on student learning and development. www.aep-arts.org/PDF%20Files/ChampsReport.pdf

A Community Audit for Arts Education: Better Schools, Better Skills, Better Communities, published by The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 2002, is a resource for communities to use in evaluating the status of their arts education programs, both within the school curriculum and in after-school or extended day programs. www.kennedy-center.org/education/kcaen/specialinitiatives/ComAudit01Sept.pdf

Summary of Large-Scale Arts Partnerships Evaluations, written by Rob Horowitz and published by the Arts Education Partnership in 2004, synthesizes the findings from six large-scale arts education partnerships. <http://aep-arts.org/PDF%20Files/Large%20Scale%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf>

[The Arts and Education: New Opportunities for Research](#) Produced by the Arts Education Partnership and a task force chaired by the American Educational Research Association, this report proposes opportunities for future research on the arts and education based on a survey of the significant body of research in the field. www.aep-arts.org/PDF%20Files/OpportunitiesResearch.pdf

Topic: Professional Development

Vision: Schools and cultural organizations encourage and provide high-quality professional development for arts specialists, teaching artists, K–12 classroom teachers, and administrators to impact classroom practice and student achievement.

Context: Student learning is optimized when practitioners are energized about their work and can implement effective methods. The commitment of key stakeholders—higher education, community organizations, school districts, and parents—is essential to the improvement of arts education in both school- and community-based programs. When high-quality professional development is sustained over time, it provides ongoing opportunities for both new and veteran practitioners and can form the basis for change in teacher practice.

Questions: What does good professional development look like—for arts specialists, teaching artists, and K–12 classroom teachers—and how can it be replicated?

How does professional development impact classroom instruction and student achievement?

How can we work more effectively with institutions of higher education?

How can we assist efforts to create a community of teaching artists?

How do we create an environment that encourages the professional development needs of all practitioners?

Resources: *Preparing Teachers of Art*, edited by Michael Day and published by NAEA in 1997, focuses on the essential role of the teacher for improving student learning and implementing school reform. This research data has generated an unprecedented wealth of visual art education information for revitalizing America's colleges and universities and preparing visual art educators for the 21st century.
www.naea-reston.org/publications-list.html

Teaching Artists Journal is the official publication of the Association of Teaching Artists (ATA). ATA offers advocacy and professional development for artists who teach in the schools and in the community. www.teachingartists.com/journal1.htm

Great Beginnings for Music Teachers: Mentoring and Supporting New Teachers, edited by Colleen M. Conway and published by MENC in 2003, covers the challenges faced by beginning music teachers, district- and state-sponsored mentoring and induction programs, alternative certification, and ideas for ongoing professional development.
www.menc.org/publication/books/normalcatsrch.html

Creating Capacity: A Framework for Providing Professional Development Opportunities for Teaching Artists, published by The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 2001, provides a philosophy, rationale, and set of guiding questions that can inform the design of professional development to enhance artists' knowledge, skills, and understandings of working in educational settings. The core components of this framework are the self-assessment tool, the resource checklist, and the teaching artists continuum.
www.kennedy-center.org/education/partners/creating_capacity_autumn_2001.pdf