

1. There is a growing disconnect between the valuing of arts education and the prioritization of it.

Introduction

Public opinion polls often show great support for arts education for children and youth. However, anecdotes and research often report a decline in arts education budgets and instructional time. This paradox indicates a schism between the value of arts education that individuals perceive and the willingness of individuals to make decisions that put the arts firmly in the school day. While many school leaders, including principals and school board members, state their high esteem for arts education, their budgeting and scheduling decisions often decrease the presence or quality of arts education in the schools they manage. This conundrum must be addressed in order to secure consistent, high quality arts education for all students.

Key Issues

- Value demands few resources from the public education system. Prioritization requires resources - including time in the school day, arts educators and financing to provide arts education.
- Advocacy messages stress the value of arts education to a student's overall success in school, work and life, but they do not consistently request decision-making priority be given to arts education.

Recent Activity

- In alignment with its government affairs work, Americans for the Arts has increased its local arts agency services to include resources and professional development on how to impact local decision-makers in public education.
- National service organizations continue to provide advocacy resources, as exemplified by a host of free toolkits created by the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network and the education department of The John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts. [LINK](#)

Call to Action

Arts education advocates are called upon now, more than ever, to meet the challenge to change the decisions of those with the power to provide arts education in a sustained, sequential way in public schools. While understanding why arts education is important for all students is a necessary condition for the desired decision making, it is not sufficient. Working with decision makers to prioritize arts education within the school day, and allocating the resources to support quality arts learning, is the work we are now called to do. For information on stakeholders in arts education, visit the Arts Education Policy Scan, created by Americans for the Arts.

Program Profiles

The VH1 Save the Music Foundation has designed its musical instrument granting program to require music education prioritization by school leaders. These high-value grants require a matching commitment from schools, including employment of a credentialed music teacher and adequate music learning resources and facilities. This program design assures a measure of leverage whereby VH1 Save the Music Foundation can help local decision-makers prioritize music education in their schools. [LINK](#)

A 2005 Harris Poll commissioned by Americans for the Arts shows that 93 percent of Americans feel that the arts are vital to a well-rounded education for children. However, arts education in public schools continues to be only sporadically available to students. Provision of arts education throughout America's public schools does not adhere to an apparently high-value placed upon the arts in public education. [LINK](#)

2. The Arts Education Delivery system has become increasingly more sophisticated.

Introduction

The arts education delivery system in the United States includes provision of arts education in and out of school; Pre-Kindergarten-16 (college) environments; credentialed arts teachers, arts partners, teaching artists, universities, and classroom teachers; and standards-based arts education as well as less structured learning environments. Defining the roles and expectations of these multiple providers has, at times, led to contentious debates within the arts education field. Over the last decade, however, many of these system participants have partnered, aligned efforts, and shared resources in order to reach more students and improve the quality of arts learning. They have also developed new tools and strategies to affect the change they seek.

Key Issues

- High quality arts education is now rooted in state and/or national academic content standards. In 1994, a partnership of the arts education professional organizations published the [National Standards in Arts Education](#). In response, 47 states have formally adopted their own [standards](#). Grant-making at the state and national levels often requires arts instruction to be standards-based. Within 15 years, the entire arts education delivery system has been galvanized by and now responds to standards-based instruction in the arts.
- Over the past decade, multiple state and city-based arts education data reports have galvanized advocacy for arts education. These and other efforts have helped the arts education field call attention to the students that are not receiving adequate—or any—arts education. Example: [New Jersey Arts Education Census Project](#).

Recent Activity

The current economic downturn has resurfaced the tensions inherent in the complex arts education system as schools and non-profit arts organizations struggle to survive.

Call to Action

Engage in cross-discipline, cross-sector conversations about how to build high quality, sustainable arts education programs in your community and in your public schools. Invite public school arts teachers, practicing artists, and higher education into the conversation; how can we support each other to enable our students “to become creative and critical thinkers, effective communicators, responsible citizens, and knowledgeable adults in producing well-rounded children with knowledge and skills in the arts”?

Program Profile

Rhode Island approved a proficiency-based graduation requirement for all students. The education and arts communities created the Rhode Island Arts Learning Network because the state lacked the infrastructure to supply the required education to all young people. From the Network’s website,

We envision a Rhode Island where all children and youth have access to rich and challenging arts learning opportunities in their homes, schools, and communities, thus enabling them to become creative and critical thinkers, effective communicators, responsible citizens, and knowledgeable adults.

This network for arts learning includes a statewide list of arts providers, free tickets to arts events for youth, and peer-to-peer teen ambassadors for arts learning. [LINK](#)

3. There are increasing efforts to build coalitions to support sustained, systemic change for arts education.

Introduction

Communities are creating coalitions of arts education professionals and supporters to bring about full-access arts education for their students. These coalitions are often led by a single leadership organization or small group of leaders, but they are successful because of a fundamental belief in shared decision-making. These efforts align cultural and philanthropic resources to support public education, in providing sequential, standards-based arts education. Integral pieces of these efforts include ownership of change efforts by the public education leaders themselves, multiple points of entry into the public education system to ensure system-wide change, and attention paid to both infrastructural and pedagogical arts education issues.

Key Issues

- Training for parents, arts professionals and other stakeholders is necessary to transform them into successful arts education advocates at the local, district, state and federal levels.
- Limited resources can lead to poor collaboration among constituents that are dependent on similar funding pools. Successful coalitions actively increase cooperation.
- Successful coalitions need time and resources to grow, as well as identified and public measures for success along the way.

Recent Activity

More cities each year are starting citywide arts education initiatives that include multiple facets—from professional development for teachers and teaching artists to advocacy. Wallace Foundation funding and the [Big Thought](#) model have brought attention and understanding to this strategy.

Call to Action

Consider undertaking an audit of your arts education opportunities for students, using the tools available from the Kennedy Center or other resources from your state or local arts agency or your school system. Identifying what you currently have, and what more needs to be done, is the first step in creating systemic and sustainable arts education change.

Program Profiles

The Wallace Foundation commissioned research on the operations of six arts education collaborative efforts across the country: Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles County, New York City and Alameda County in Northern California.

These communities “have been tackling that challenge by using “coordinated approaches” that seek to have schools and other providers join forces in a sustained effort to expand access to and quality of arts learning.”

[LINK](#)

The Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network created a [Community Audit for Arts Education](#) in 2000 to help communities identify the strengths and weaknesses of their public education programs in the arts. The audit is also a tool to begin dialogue among stakeholders on how to create systemic change for arts education.

4. Arts Education is increasingly influenced by federal policy.

Introduction

While education remains a function of state government and local school districts, education and arts education are increasingly influenced by federal education policy. In turn, arts education leaders have increased their attempts to influence federal policy. Underfunded and contradictory federal policies, however, have resulted in decreased quality in and access to arts education for students.

Key Issues

- The arts are listed as a core academic subject in *No Child Left Behind*. The 2002 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act kept the arts as a core academic subject.
- While *No Child Left Behind* has benefited arts education, it has also brought with it a strict accountability system tied to absolute measures of student achievement in reading and math. This system and the ramifications for failing to meet its requirements has created pressure on schools to increase instructional time for tested subjects and [decreased time](#) for other core academic subjects, including the arts.
- U.S. Department of Education competitive grants in arts education – both [professional development](#) and [model program development](#) – have great influence on arts education programs throughout the country, although the dollars are minimal compared to state and local investments in arts education.

Program Profiles

National organizations have leveraged the arts as a core subject in federal education legislation by publishing [No Subject Left Behind](#), a guide to accessing funding that is directed within NCLB for arts education.

Arizona for example funds [arts integration and arts education programs](#) through Title I of No Child Left Behind, specifically the stimulus funds for Title I, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Recent Activity

The Arts Education Legislative Working Group, a coalition representing each sector of arts education, provides input into the federal legislative process to support student access to arts education. Its work includes impact on USDoE funding and policy, NEA budget allocations, and recommended changes to the upcoming re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, currently titled No Child Left Behind.

Call to Action

Keep up-to-date on federal legislation and funding which may impact arts education. Check Americans for the Arts' [Arts Action Center](#) to stay in touch with current issues and be an advocate for arts education at the federal level. At the state level consider working with your State Alliance for Arts Education and/or Citizen Advocates for the Arts to stay informed about state level issues and advocate for arts education at the state level.

5. Arts education professional development has increased in quality but not necessarily in demand.

Introduction

Arts Education in the United States has seen a significant increase in professional learning quantity and quality over the past two decades. Increased attention from funders, including demands for evaluation, have improved quality in professional development partnerships offered by arts organizations. Demand has not kept pace with improvements to the quality of professional learning offered, especially by outside (non-school based) providers of arts education.

Key Issues

- Arts partners have evolved their programming from mainly providing arts instruction directly to learners, to creating professional development for teachers to teach in and through the arts. In part, this is a strategy to increase student access to arts instruction in a more systemic way than artists-in-residence or cultural visits.
- Increased expectations from school administrators, significant public and private investment in the field, and NCLB Title IIA requirements for funding intensive, high quality professional development programs have increased the quality of offerings nationwide.
- Economic constraints, and a focus on reading and writing as part of the federal accountability system under Title I, have limited educator access to and interest in these higher level professional development offerings in the arts.

Recent Activity

Since 2002, the US Department of Education has funded programs providing [professional development](#) for arts educators and classroom teachers.

Call to Action

Professional development providers interested in overcoming the gap between demand and quality may need to develop closer working relationships with their partnering school districts (see Trend #3 for examples) and/or develop partnerships with other arts education professional development providers in their community to market programs. Information on arts education professional development can be found in the [National Arts Policy Database](#).

Program Profile

Since 1996, New York State Council on the Arts has invested \$18 million to more than 190 arts education partnerships between schools and cultural organizations. The manager of this grantmaking, Empire State Partnership (ESP) Office of Partnership Support and Research, is described as an ambitious and effective professional development program. It boasts the following critical elements.

- Individual partnership professional development is established to meet curricular, artistic, and capacity building needs.
- Regional leadership and learning networks synthesize trends and needs in professional practice.
- Summer seminars for practitioners offer peer-to-peer reflection and assessment.
- National leaders keep practice current and competitive.

ESP has reached a high quality of professional development. While attendance and participation have not diminished greatly over the years, the participants express concern over the multitude of competing professional development offerings and mandates from schools and funders.

[LINK](#)

6. An emphasis on 21st century workforce skills creates an opportunity for arts education.

Introduction

Recent interest by advocates, business and education leaders has focused on changing education in order to meet 21st century skills which will lead to success for students in school, work, and life. The arts are poised to benefit from the stated 21st century need for creativity and innovation. National, state and local conversations comprised of for-profit, civic, and education leaders are emphasizing creativity, imagination and innovation—particularly for the future success of the American workforce, the environment, and economic development.

Key Issues

- The push for [21st Century Skills](#) is balanced with a call from the National Governors Association on creating "[Common Core](#)" state standards in reading and mathematics.
- While 21st Century Skills and their ties to arts education have been part of the nationwide discussion of arts advocates, the focus of the new administration, via its competitive ARRA grants, Race to the Top and I3, has been on STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Recent Activity

- Ohio, Oklahoma and Wisconsin are each engaged in statewide changes in educational policy or direction to emphasize creativity across sectors.
- [Sir Ken Robinson](#) and [Daniel Pink](#) have reached status as minor celebrities for their case-making and recommendations for the need for creative workers in the future and power of creativity in the health of the American economy.

Call to Action

Advocates will need to buttress arguments that creativity and innovation are skills achieved through arts education with new research or new research reviews that demonstrate that link. To date, that link is assumed but not documented.

Program Profile

The Wisconsin Task Force on Arts and Creativity in Education was created and chaired by Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton and State Superintendent of Schools Elizabeth Burmaster. The Task Force was charged to:

address the essential role arts education and the development of all students' creative capacities plays in the lives of students, in defining their future, the quality of life in Wisconsin communities and our state's economy.

In 2009, the Task Force released a report that defined imagination, creativity and innovation. The report defended the need for changes in practice and policy for the sake of Wisconsin's future economy and the quality of life of its citizens. Recommendations in the report implicate business, community, and public education.

[LINK](#)

7. Arts learning and instruction are increasingly influenced by electronic media.

Introduction

From a tool to gather information, to a tool in consuming art, to an aid in producing art, technology is playing a larger role in arts learning and creation. A new electronic learning environment is replacing the culture of conventional schools. As students become increasingly savvy in the use of technology and in mediated arts experiences, arts educators and others providing artistic expertise are not always as experienced, creating digital learning divides in the classroom as well as community.

Key Issues

- Much of artistic process is collaborative in nature. Live, in-person collaboration is a different experience from technologically based collaboration.
- Information and individuals around the globe are accessible, creating a broader artistic network and community for budding artists, as well as collaborative partners in the creation of art.
- There is a need to balance mediated experiences with “live” experiences as intended by the artist (e.g. dance performance; viewing a work of art)
- The online arts education community is able to provide information and services to more individuals around the globe without significant investment increases.

Recent Activities

[Minnesota](#) is looking at a separate section of arts standards devoted to the media arts in response to this rapidly developing artistic field.

Call to Action

This aspect of arts education is quickly evolving and ever changing. Arts educators should understand the creative opportunities and limitations of technology and media, and work to develop students who can use the new technological tools of their artistic mediums.

Program Profiles

From Garage Band to online portfolios to internet based access to information many programs are using technology to enhance arts education.

Metropolitan Museum of Art's [Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History](#) is a comprehensive online tool that chronicles art history and provides high resolution images of artwork that exemplify many different time periods and styles.

Many organizations, including [MENC](#) and [ArtBlutprint.org](#), are posting lesson plan ideas on their websites for teacher use.

Software like [ejamming](#) allows musicians around the world to collaborate online in real time without leaving their homes.