



**AEP FALL 2009 NATIONAL FORUM  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
The Hotel Marlowe**

**Sandra S. Ruppert  
Opening Remarks**

Friday, October 2, 2009  
8:30 AM

Welcome to the Fall 2009 AEP National Forum. I'm Sandra Ruppert, the director of the Arts Education Partnership. And I am thrilled to welcome all of you to one of the largest – if not the largest – National Forum in AEP's 15-year history.

Some of you may be attending your first AEP National Forum, so first a little bit about who we are and what we do. The Arts Education Partnership was formed in 1994 as the result of a unique partnership between the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Arts -- a partnership that has continued unbroken through different administrations for more than 15 years now.

We are in fact a working partnership with more than 100 partner organizations, all of whom are working toward a common agenda of ensuring the arts remain an integral component of a high quality education for every child.

Our partners include federal arts and education agencies, state departments of education, state arts agencies, national arts and education organizations, and arts and education collaboratives at the state and local level. And our governance committee includes the two agencies representing the arts and education at the federal level – the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education – and the two national organizations representing arts and education at the state level – the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and the Council of Chief State School Officers. As staff to the partnership, we focus on research and policy analysis, technical assistance, and communications and advocacy for the arts education field. And, of course, we host convenings, such as this National Forum, twice a year.

I believe that our record attendance at this Forum here in Cambridge, Massachusetts speaks to the singular moment in which we meet today, one in which the many streams of education reform that have ushered separately for years, conveying the diverse hopes and aspirations of artists, educators, researchers, leaders, and knowledge workers, converge into one shared vision: That by guaranteeing every American child a

complete and quality education that includes the arts, we can bring about a better future.

This Forum is historic not only in its registration numbers. It is geographically diverse, with attendees from all over the country. It features a cadre of presenters, in plenaries, roundtables and small group sessions alike. It features leaders from the federal government, states, districts, schools, and communities. I think it is fair to say we are all here in a common purpose.

It is also historic in that we look back 15 years to the founding on AEP in a packing meeting in Washington. Then, as now, people were animated by a single powerful idea: That the arts represent the missing puzzle piece, the key that unlocks the future of education. But these were not new ideas even then.

More than two centuries ago, in 1780, John Adams famously said, "I must study politics and war, that my sons have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy... geography, natural history and... agriculture, in order to give *their* children a right to study painting, poetry, music and architecture..." 229 years later, it is astonishing how far short of his vision our nation has come.

We still have a lot of work to do.

But we can now revisit his prophecy with the understanding that the intellectual toolbox of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is different from that of the 18<sup>th</sup>. The literacies of power then were statecraft and canal building and naval architecture. The literacies of power today are the arts, because, more than any other subject, they serve as the whetstone for sharpening the creative mind. Whether taught separately as discreet disciplines or integrated across the curriculum, they are "first among equals" that offer the keys to academic success, societal engagement, and even global competition. We know this, because more than two decades of research tell us so.

This evening, we will have the opportunity to recognize some of that research and visit with some of its pioneers at our reception honoring the scholars of the AEP publication *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*, which was released in 1999. As we look back at that research and look to our own work and that of our colleagues in the various 21<sup>st</sup> century learning movements, we are amazed at how clearly the studies in *Champions* prefigured our work here today, with their focus on creativity and fluency and flexible problem solving. And that work continues today.

In the two days that follow, we will be charting a course for the future; we will explore the research, critically examine its implications for policy, and jointly map the road ahead into this challenging but wonderfully promising century.

Thank you.