



The Role of Arts Learning in the ESEA Reauthorization
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ESEA Reauthorization Meeting
Wednesday, January 20, 2010

Good afternoon. In the few minutes available, I will summarize what we know about the value of learning in and through the arts. This is not an easy task, since the arts—almost more than any other subject—are able to engage students in creative learning, reanimate teaching, and transform schools into vibrant centers of community cultural life.

These conclusions are supported by over 20 years of evidence-based research. Let me cite just three studies from the last year alone:

- In New York City, the Center for Arts Education released findings substantiating that high schools with a higher concentration of arts classes, experiences and resources also had the city's highest graduation rates.
- In North Carolina, evaluators of the statewide arts-based A+ Schools Program documented the significant positive impacts of the arts on the quality of the school environment and as a model for whole-school reform.
- And, for the nation as a whole, based on new analyses from the Department's own NELS:88 data, researchers at UCLA found students' involvement in arts education was significantly correlated with gains in academic success and pro-social behavior, including increased rates of volunteerism and political participation.

These findings support our core belief at AEP that good policy must follow good research and that it should support future research in order to deepen our knowledge.

From this research, we can draw one inescapable conclusion:

In almost direct proportion to the extent that students are marginalized, disadvantaged, or at risk, the arts exert a powerful countervailing force that keeps them in school, points them toward success, and prepares them for creative and productive lives.

This we know. We also know that coalitions of parents, educators, school leaders, and community leaders believe in and want the arts for American students.

Unfortunately, the arts, along with other untested subjects, are often squeezed from the school day through the unintended effects of No Child Left Behind, as reported in a recent study by the General Accounting Office. These effects are most pronounced for low-income and minority students.

In fact, the 2008 NAEP Arts Assessment showed that on almost every measure in visual arts and music, students of color and those from low income households are at a disadvantage. In general, they have less access to instruction, have lower levels of participation, and are less likely to receive instruction from a certified arts teacher.

Put simply, we provide students who are likely to benefit the most from arts instruction with the least of everything. If we want to close the achievement gap, then we will have to turn this pattern around.

These limitations in the most recent ESEA point us to the essential imperatives of this moment: to use the reauthorization to provide a course correction toward education reform's "True North."

- This means an ESEA that places the arts at parity with math, science, and language arts as tested subjects and yardsticks for school success.
- It means boosting dollars for arts-infused teacher training, both pre-service and in-service.
- It means the support of new research initiatives that broaden and deepen our knowledge of how the arts do their work, and how they can do it better.
- It means working with the arts education community to revitalize education policy at all levels of the nation.

On all these imperatives, AEP stands ready to help.

Ultimately, it means that we have an opportunity, unparalleled in our time, to forge a vision for an American education system that includes the vital goal of equity and success for all young people. And it does so by recognizing, encompassing, and harnessing the power of arts learning to engage student creativity, reanimate teaching, and transform schools.

Thank you.

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