

# THE CRITICAL LINK

AEP is a national coalition of arts, education, business, philanthropic and government organizations that demonstrates and promotes the essential role of the arts in the learning and development of every child and in the improvement of America's schools.

The Partnership was formed in 1995 through a cooperative agreement among the **National Endowment for the Arts**, the **U.S. Department of Education**, the **National Assembly of State Arts Agencies**, and the **Council of Chief State School Officers**.

*The Critical Link* is a quarterly newsletter featuring articles and resources on emerging issues related to arts education and promising practices from AEP's partnering organizations.

## Message from the Director, Richard Deasy

This issue of *The Critical Link* focuses on resources that will help arts educators understand and respond to the federal education law known as No Child Left Behind. The law presents both opportunities and challenges for arts education. It affirms that the arts must be taught in every school as one of the "core subjects" of the curriculum and it permits federal funds to be spent supporting the arts. One section of the law provides funding dedicated to developing demonstration projects, professional development and community-based programs in the arts. But arts advocates

also will want to examine how they might seek support in the more richly funded sections of the law – for example, compensatory education and the professional development of teachers and principals. State departments of education manage the distribution of most of the funding in the law, so a new report from the National Association of State Boards of Education is very important. It urges its members and state legislators to adopt strong policies in support of arts education. This and other resources to help capitalize on the possibilities in the act and respond to its challenges are discussed here.

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Visit us on the web! [www.aep-arts.org](http://www.aep-arts.org)

(Past newsletters are stored in the archive)

## Washington Watch: Federal Arts and Education Update

Shortly after the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, a collection of organizations involved in AEP came together and produced a document that offers guidance on how the new federal education law impacts arts education, and the opportunities for funding within the legislation. As we head into 2004, the creators of this guidance, called "No Subject Left Behind," are preparing an update.

One of the components within No Child Left Behind that has been getting much attention recently is the "High Quality Teacher Definition" and how it will impact the certification and hiring of teachers. Many have asked for some guidance that addresses how the Teacher Quality provisions may affect teaching of the arts, so you

can now find a set of Frequently Asked Questions about Teacher Quality and the arts on the AEP web site. The most important issue to keep in mind is that the law applies to new and veteran teachers employed by schools and districts on a full time basis. Each state is addressing the requirements differently so it is important to follow up with your state department of education if you have questions. Most have details available on their web sites.

We encourage you to look at the "Frequently Asked Questions About NCLB's Highly Qualified Teacher Definition and the Arts" and the updated "No Subject Left Behind" on the AEP web site in January in the "Funding Opportunities" section of the AEP web site.

### Targets of Opportunity:

- Nominations for the National Medal of Arts may be submitted online from January 15–April 16 at [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov)
- Full Partnership Meeting, January 25-26, 2004, Dallas, TX
- NEA's Arts Learning grants guidelines will be posted in January at [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov)

## Spotlight on Research

In October, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) released a report that is expressing concern about the possibility of schools and districts narrowing the curriculum in part to meet the demands of the No Child Left Behind Act. *The Complete Curriculum: Ensuring a place for the arts and foreign languages in America's schools*, is a report from a special NASBE committee composed of members of state boards of education as well as senior advisors from the arts and foreign language fields. It also comes on the heels of the results from the recent *Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools* which revealed

that 80% of respondents have a great concern that the emphasis on solely testing in English and math "to judge a school's performance will mean less emphasis on art, music, history, and other subjects." The NASBE report makes several recommendations for state policymakers focusing on licensure requirements, adequate staff expertise at state departments of education, including the arts in graduation requirements, and more. It offers important messages for state lawmakers and boards of education. Ordering information is available from NASBE at [www.nasbe.org](http://www.nasbe.org). The PDK poll is available at [www.pdkintl.org](http://www.pdkintl.org).

## News from the Field

Since 2000, AEP has been collecting information about state arts education policies and providing a searchable database on its web site. Of great interest to many is the use of arts assessments nationwide. Based on the information currently posted in AEP's 2003-04 State Arts Education Policy database, we know that varying models of arts assessment are in place across the US. Only a few states have some current form of mandated statewide arts assessment including Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, and New Mexico. These states vary widely in assessment methods, as well as the art forms and grade levels that are assessed. Kentucky is

one example where the arts assessment scores contribute to the school's accountability rating.

Many other states have strategies in place to conduct statewide assessments, or assist school districts in developing their own. Connecticut has established a web site for educators that contains arts assessment examples. Washington state has been authorized to support voluntary arts assessment at all grade levels starting in 05-06, and performance-based assessments were field tested throughout the state in 2003. Visit the AEP web site for more details.

## Suggested Resources on...Arts Education Evaluation

*Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge* (Final Project Report).

<http://www.aep-arts.org/Evaluation%20&%20Research.htm>

*Arts Education Program Assessment Worksheets* (for use by ABC school sites in South Carolina.) <http://www.winthrop.edu/abc/theatreoptolearn.htm>

*Learning Partnerships Evaluation Workbook.* [http://www.umass.edu/aes/learningpartners/LPevalwkbk\\_title.htm](http://www.umass.edu/aes/learningpartners/LPevalwkbk_title.htm)

*Final Evaluation Report on the Center for Arts Education's New York City Partnerships for Arts and Education Program* (2000-01).

<http://www.cae-nyc.org/downloads/>

## Featured AEP Publication

Name: Gaining the Arts Advantage: Lessons from School Districts that Value Arts Education

Year: 1999

Author: AEP and the President's Committee on Arts and Humanities

Features case studies and profiles of 91 school districts throughout the US that are recognized for offering arts education throughout their schools. Identifies the critical factors that must be in place to implement and sustain comprehensive arts education.

How to obtain a copy: Visit [www.aep-arts.org](http://www.aep-arts.org) and click on "Publications and Resources."

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