

# 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

As the new school year starts up, the Arts Education Partnership is focused on targeting opportunities for disseminating the best available research, theory and best practices in arts education that will help facilitate the professional skills of teachers of the arts including arts specialists, artists and classroom teachers. AEP's groundbreaking compendium of arts education research, *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development* has inspired a number of important resources, including a new professional development web site for teachers and administrators that takes them through a multi-step inquiry process that will

help them develop questions pertinent to their classroom practice and gather evidence to answer their questions. This research has also been cited in a new advocacy tool from U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige that illustrates the importance of the arts in the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Combined with the latest materials from the Education Commission of the States, including a recent interview with Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas who is making arts education his primary focus as ECS chairman, arts educators and advocates have the prospect of placing this issue at the forefront of the education agenda in the coming year.

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## Washington Watch: Federal Arts and Education Update

Arts education advocates have a new tool in working with state and local policy makers: an important letter sent by U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige to all local school superintendents and Chief State School Officers setting the record straight on the arts within the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The Secretary provides guidance on the law's funding and flexibility which is especially helpful for school leaders who are looking for opportunities to include the arts. Paige also clarified that the arts are outlined as a core subject within the NCLB guidelines. Each state determines the definition of the arts, but it is clear that the arts are subject to the same funding opportunities within the federal legislation as any other content area. He specifies that the arts are allowed the same flexibility as other core subjects, and outlines several examples using Title I and

other NCLB funds.

Secretary Paige also included a listing of additional resources in arts education for school leaders including *No Subject Left Behind*, a guide that outlines the arts education funding opportunities within NCLB. The guide is available on the Arts Education Partnership web site at <http://www.aep-arts.org> in the National and State Advocacy section. The Arts Education Partnership has encouraged partnerships across the country to make sure that school leaders and other educators are aware of this letter, and to distribute copies of it at school board meetings.

Copies of the letter and related materials are available on the U.S. Department of Education web site at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/040701.html>

### Targets of Opportunity:

- October is Arts and Humanities Month (visit [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov) for details)
- Full Partnership Meeting, January 30-31, 2005, Los Angeles, CA. Theme: Critical Issues in Arts Education

## Spotlight on Research

The Arts Education Partnership in collaboration with the Perpich Center for Arts Education in Minnesota has created a web-based professional development resource that helps teachers and administrators apply research to daily classroom practice. *Critical Links: A Professional Inquiry Process* includes a seven step process with structured activities that helps teachers develop their own research expertise to improve their instructional practices. This website was created to make AEP's compendium of research, *Critical Links*, more useful and meaningful to teachers' practitioners' work in the classroom. Starting with activities that help develop a learning community among faculty members, each step includes a series of printable resources with standards and principles of best practice, tools for developing ques-

tions and creating a plan, and ideas for presenting initial findings with others in the school and community. It also contains video interviews with teachers who have used the inquiry process and lessons learned. The resources and tools available on the site were developed by teachers and have been put to the test with teacher focus groups. "We also shared it with others at the recent AEP forum and we learned that many working in arts organizations can see how to adapt this tool for their needs in working with teaching artists and many others" said Pamela Paulson, Deputy Director of the Perpich Center. For more information, visit the *Critical Links* web site at <http://www.criticallinks.org>. The website will be launched on November 1st.

## News from the Field

Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas sat down recently with AEP director Dick Deasy to discuss why he has chosen to make arts education the focus of his two-year tenure as Chairman of the Education Commission of the States (ECS). *Putting the Arts Front and Center on the Education Agenda* is the title of the brief made available by ECS also gives an inside look at the governor's passion for arts education. He explains that he doesn't hear much talk about the importance of arts education in his conversations with the education community, and he is committed to advocating for the essential role of the arts in education. His belief is that the arts are important for not only academic success, but

also for developing good citizenship. He credits the arts, particularly music and drama, as keys to his own success. "...I look back and realize some of the wonderful life lessons I have learned – everything from teamwork to a sense of discipline – and I know I have learned those things from music." Among his strategies for accomplishing the goal, he plans to work with the corporate community who he believes will be very eager to partner in this effort with schools across the country. To find out more about the Chairman's initiative, *The Arts: A Lifetime of Learning*, and to sign the guestbook, visit the ECS web site at <http://www.ecs.org/Huckabee>

## Suggested Resources on...Professional Development

**Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative (U.S. Department of Education)**  
<http://www.ed.gov/teacherinitiative>

**Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Arts Education Network** (click on Arts Education)  
<http://www.ascd.org/cms/index.cfm?TheViewID=427>

**The Arts in Every Classroom: A Workshop for Elementary School Teachers and A Video Library K-5**  
<http://www.learner.org>

**Creating Capacity: A Framework for Providing Professional Development Opportunities for Teaching Artists**  
<http://www.kennedy-center.org/education/partners>

### Featured AEP Publication

**Name:** Teaching Partnerships: Report of a National Forum on Partnerships Improving Teaching of the Arts  
**Year:** 2003

**Authors:** Deasy, Richard J., ed.

**Description:** Highlights 13 exemplary partnerships between colleges and universities, schools and districts, and arts and cultural organizations that are examining the policies and actions needed to insure that the arts are being well taught well in our schools.

**How to obtain a copy:** Visit <http://www.aep-arts.org> and click on "Publications"

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