

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.

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**.

In This Issue...

Message from the Director

Featured AEP Publication

Spotlight on Research

News from the Field

Suggested Resources on...
Implementation of NCLB

Targets of Opportunity:

- Americans for the Arts Preconference, June 1-2, 2006 in Milwaukee, WI. Focus: Creating Common Ground: Arts Education Policy & Practice.
- AEP National Forum, June 23-24, 2006 in Chicago, IL. Focus: Partnering with Higher Education: Profiling What's Possible.

Message from the Director, Richard Deasy

The rising concern among parents and teachers – documented in recent public opinion polling conducted for the Ford Foundation – that an unintended consequence of the No Child Left Behind Act is the reduction of time during the school day for teaching the arts and other disciplines is both a challenge and an opportunity for arts education advocates. The concern is being validated by the recent findings of a survey conducted in 37 school districts by Washington-based Center for Education Policy that reading and math instruction is squeezing arts out of the curriculum. That effect was foretold by the 2004 report of the Council on Basic Education, *Academic Atrophy: The Condition of the Liberal Arts in America's Public Schools*, based on a survey of school principals in four states. Similarly, the National Association of State Boards of Education warned of the trend in its report, *The Com-*

plete Curriculum: Ensuring a place for the arts and foreign languages in American's schools. Arts educators themselves, of course, have been aware of the emerging trend. The challenge and opportunity of the broadening of the concern among parents and teachers is to reach out to these potentially powerful allies and provide them with the information and arguments found in the growing body of research on the effects of arts learning, including the research conducted and compiled by AEP. That research shows the enormous benefit to all students and schools, and the particular value of the arts for the very populations and schools that are the focus of NCLB. Parents and teachers can then join us in delivering the message to education policy makers and administrators that cutting back on the arts is a profound disservice to children and counterproductive for developing the generation that will shape America's 21st century.

Featured AEP Publication—*Third Space: When Learning Matters*

A new book from the Arts Education Partnership urges policy makers and educators to look to the arts as a powerful way to improve student achievement and success and create vibrant learning communities in all schools, particularly those struggling to meet the demands of *No Child Left Behind*.

Third Space: When Learning Matters is based on three years of research conducted by the Arts Education Partnership in ten high poverty rural and urban schools across the country. The schools have made the arts central to their curriculum, with powerful impacts on students, teachers and the entire school community. The book explores why the arts have such positive effects, adopting "third space" as a metaphor to capture the new contexts and conditions the arts create in the schools and the new possibilities for teaching, learning and community building these environments foster. The research suggests that educational reform can emerge from the bottom up, when the student becomes the epicenter of school transformation. The arts create the optimal conditions to engage students actively in learning that matters to them – a quality identified by researchers from cognitive science, student engagement, and youth develop-

ment as the key to deep understanding and self-directed learning. As forms of uniquely personal and original expressions that link the lives of students outside of school with classroom performance, the arts become revelations to teachers of capacities they can tap in individual students. The new collaborative teacher-student relationships create a dynamic that can transform the entire school.

Third Space: When Learning Matters, was released in Washington, DC on November 15, 2005, with a ceremony at the National Education Association. Notable leaders in the fields of education and the arts such as John Wilson, executive director of the National Education Association, and Joseph Villani, deputy executive director of the National School Board Association, joined other educational leaders in voicing enthusiastic praise of the book.

As of March 21, 2006 the *Third Space* release has generated 240 newspaper articles in 26 different states with a readership of 14,948,640. Please visit the AEP web site at <http://www.aep-arts.org/ThirdSpacehome.htm> to view a tool kit, order information and a sample of published newspaper articles.

Spotlight on Research

Using Research to Advance Statewide Arts Education Progress in Washington State

At AEP's February 2006 Forum, attendees were given an opportunity to learn about the *Arts Education Resources Initiative*, a state level project that was launched to understand the status of arts education statewide, and identify attributes of effective practice. Presenters included **Gerri Spilka**, *OMG Center for Collaborative Learning*, **Kris Tucker**, *Washington State Arts Commission*, and **Susy Watts**, *Washington State Arts Commission - Arts Education Resources Initiative* and *Pacific Lutheran University*.

The Arts Education Resources Initiative (AERI) aims to help schools step up to the challenge of bringing high quality arts education to all their students. The recently released website and booklet build on the work of AERI researchers, who surveyed principals statewide and conducted in-depth interviews at 32 sites. The researchers

sought to identify successful site-based approaches in Washington schools and districts and the key supports and barriers to their progress; to learn Washington principals' priorities for the arts and their recommendations for improving arts education; and to identify next steps for sustained results in arts education. The elements and attributes of strong arts programs were identified jointly by AERI researchers, the Washington State Arts Commission (WSAC), and the Arts Implementation Task Force. This project also benefits from WSAC's long-term commitment to arts education, including annual evaluations of WSAC's Community Consortium Grants.

Action agendas discussing curriculum, assessments, teaching capacity and funding, as well as suggestions for what you can do as an arts education partner are all available on the AERI website at <http://www.arts.wa.gov/aeri.html>.

News from the Field

U.S. Department of Education Grants Awarded

The U.S. Department of Education announced over \$10 million in grant awards in two competitive grant categories. Fourteen grants, totaling about \$3.9 million, were made in the Model Development & Dissemination Grant Program. These grants support the further development, implementation and expansion of standards-based arts education programs and the integration of arts instruction into the core curriculum. Please visit <http://www.ed.gov/programs/artsedmodel/2005awards.html> to read more about the grantees and their programs.

Additionally, 23 new awards totaling \$6,169,184 were made in the Professional Development for Arts Educators Grant Program. Please visit <http://www.ed.gov/programs/artsedprofdev/awards.html> for more information.

FY 2007 Arts Education "Dear Colleague" Letter Update

A record 136 members of Congress signed onto a March 16, 2006 "Dear Colleague" letter in support of \$53 million for the Arts in Education programs of the U.S. Department of Education. The letter included 14 Republican signatures - the largest numbers ever to sign on in support of the programs. The Arts in Education programs currently receive \$35.3 million in funding. For more information on the arts education community's unified advocacy efforts, see the Arts Advocacy Day issue

brief, here: http://www.artsusa.org/pdf/get_involved/advocacy/congressional_arts_handbook/2006/fy2007_education_appropriations.pdf

NEA Jazz in the Schools

NEA Jazz in the Schools is an educational resource for high school teachers of social studies, U.S. history, and music. The five-unit, web-based curriculum and DVD toolkit explores jazz as an indigenous American art form and as a means to understand American history. The kit includes a teachers' guide with five curricular units featuring teacher tips, cross-curricular activities, and assessment methods. Each kit also includes student materials, a timeline poster, a CD, and a DVD featuring video and musical excerpts along with all print materials in digital form. Please visit the *NEA Jazz in the Schools* web site at www.neajazzintheschools.org.

Target Offers Arts in Education Grants

Your local Target store is authorized to make *Arts in Education Grants* within your community. Target will accept grant applications between March 1 and May 31, 2006. Most grants average between \$1,000 and \$3,000. Applications will be reviewed as they are received, and all funding decisions will be communicated no later than September 30, 2006. Please visit http://target.com/target_group/community_giving/arts_in_education_grants.jhtml for more information.

Suggested Resources on... Implementation of NCLB

Arts Education Partnership

No Subject Left Behind, 2005
<http://www.aep-arts.org/PDF%20Files/NoSubjectLeftBehind2005.pdf>

Center On Education Policy

From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act, 2006
<http://www.cep-dc.org/nclb/Year4/Press/>

Council on Basic Education

Academic Atrophy: The Condition of the Liberal Arts in America's Public Schools, 2004
<http://www.ecs.org/html/offsite.asp?document=http%3A%2F%2Fdownloads%2Fencss%2Eorg%2Flegislative%2FAcademicAtrophy%2Epdf>

National Association of State Boards of Education

The Complete Curriculum: Ensuring a place for the arts and foreign languages in American's Schools, 2003
<http://www.nasbe.org>

Arts Education Partnership
One Massachusetts Ave. NW
Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20001-1431
Info. Line: (202) 326-8693
Fax: (202) 408-8081
<http://www.aep-arts.org>

How to Subscribe to *The Critical Link*: send an email to aep@ccsso.org and in the message, type "subscribe Critical Link your name."

How to Unsubscribe from *The Critical Link*: send an email to aep@ccsso.org and in the message, type "unsubscribe Critical Link your name."

Editor: Kathy Beachler,
AEP Associate

© Arts Education Partnership