

# The Art of Collaboration:

## *Promising Practices for Integrating the Arts and School Reform*

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*This second publication in the Arts Education Partnership's Research and Policy Brief series focuses on the implementation and practice of eight demonstration sites participating in The Ford Foundation's Integrating the Arts and Education Reform Initiative. The brief describes a number of strategies identified by site directors at this early stage of the initiative as useful for building and managing a collaborative organization that works toward integrating the arts into public education in an urban area.*

### Introduction

In June 2007, the Arts Education Partnership (AEP) convened the directors of eight collaborative entities to discuss promising practices for integrating the arts into the lives and curricula of urban public schools as a means of fostering system-wide educational improvement. The seven school-community collaboratives and one higher education collaborative represented at the one-day seminar at Oklahoma City University were selected based on their participation in The Ford Foundation's *Integrating the Arts and Education Reform (Arts-Ed) Initiative*. Each collaborative is partially supported, and in some cases was initiated, by grants from The Ford Foundation.

This research and policy brief describes some of the strategies discussed during the directors' roundtable discussion. At the seminar, as the directors talked candidly about challenges and opportunities they face in managing their organizations during this start-up phase of the initiative, a general consensus emerged about particular approaches and practices that may be helpful to others in the

field. The purpose of this brief is to share these ideas with a broader audience of those engaged and interested in using community-based arts education collaboration as an agent for system change.

The Ford Arts-Ed Initiative is a national, multi-year effort launched in 2004 and guided by two overarching goals: (1) to significantly improve the quality of students' education by providing integrated arts education opportunities across urban school systems, and (2) to foster the widespread belief that the arts are an essential part of a high-quality education. The initiative supports the demonstration sites in achieving these goals by assisting efforts that build strong, sustained district commitments to arts education and develop comprehensive advocacy strategies.

The Arts Education Partnership, a national coalition of education, arts, government, and philanthropic organizations, receives support from The Ford Foundation to convene and provide technical assistance to the Arts-Ed demonstration sites. One of AEP's goals is to provide the site participants with opportunities, such as the seminar in Oklahoma City, to learn from one another's experiences and exchange ideas and strategies. Also, Douglas Gould and Company and the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning participate in the initiative as partner organizations that provide assistance to and evaluation of the sites.

The seven school-community collaboratives participating in the initiative are: the Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership (Alameda County, CA); Ask for More Arts (Jackson, MS); Baltimore Partners for Enhanced Learning (Baltimore, MD); Dallas Arts Learning Initiative (Dallas, TX); the Cleveland Integrated Arts Collaborative (Cleveland, OH); the



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*The mission of the Arts Education Partnership is to demonstrate and promote the essential role of the arts in enabling every student to succeed in school, life and work in the diverse and global economies and societies of the 21st century.*