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The Arts Education Partnership Convenes U.S. Leaders to Examine the State of Arts Education in America's Schools

ArtsEdSearch to Launch as Nation's First Digital Clearinghouse of Arts Education Research

(WASHINGTON, DC) Armed with emerging evidence and exemplary models of education reform through the arts, the Arts Education Partnership (AEP) will challenge the nation's arts and education leaders to steer American education policy in a new direction at its Spring 2012 National Forum: **"Are We There Yet? Arts Evidence and the Road to Student Success."** The Forum takes place on April 12-13 at the Renaissance Washington, DC Dupont Circle Hotel located at 1143 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. Registration is open at www.aep-arts.org until April 11, 2012.

Forum attendees will be among the first to preview two new national resources that offer a snapshot on the status of arts education in America: the U.S. Department of Education's recently released report: "Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools: 1999-2000 and 2009-10" and **ArtsEdSearch**—the nation's first digital research and policy clearinghouse focused entirely on learning outcomes associated with arts learning in and out of school.

AEP's National Forum places arts learning at the forefront of the national conversation on education reform with decades of research demonstrating that students in schools with arts-rich learning environments academically outperform their peers in arts-poor schools. The Forum will also address issues related to disparities in arts learning with AEP's research analysis indicating that while low-income and at-risk students benefit the most from the arts, they are least likely to have access to a high quality arts education.

Presenters representing local, state, and national organizations will share how the work they are doing in the arts is transforming school communities across the country with improved student engagement and learning, successful school-community partnerships, and greater teacher effectiveness. The culmination of these discussions will be **John Merrow, Education Correspondent for PBS NewsHour and president of Learning Matters, Inc.** who joins as the Forum's keynote speaker.

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Merrow will present new thinking about America's state of education and urge national action to energize "The 80,"— the estimated 80 percent of U.S. households without children whose influential voices and votes have the power, Merrow believes, to alter public education and strengthen arts programs in schools across America.

Merrow joins a legion of other Forum luminaries including:

- John Q. Easton, Ph.D. – Director, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education
- Virginia Edwards – Publisher and Editor of Education Week
- Rachel Goslins – Executive Director, President's Committee on Arts and the Humanities
- Jean Hendrickson – Executive Director, Oklahoma A+ Schools
- Dennis Inhulsen, Principal, Patterson Elementary School, Michigan
- Cassius O. Johnson—Associate VP, National Education Policy, Jobs for the Future
- Rocco Landesman – Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts
- James H. Shelton III –Assistant Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Education
- Valerie Strauss - Education Reporter, The Washington Post
- Gene Wilhoit – Executive Director, Council of Chief State School Officers

The Forum commences on Thursday, **April 12 at 8:30 a.m.** with opening remarks by Sandra Ruppert, AEP Executive Director, followed by the **Positive Directions Through Dance** troupe—a recipient of the prestigious 2011 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award. The morning's plenary session "Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Using Evidence-based Arts Research to Inform Education Policy and Practice" will explore how arts education research can be better aligned to address some of education's most challenging issues such as high school drop-out rates and college-and-career readiness.

On **April 13 at 8:30 a.m.**, the Forum will open with a moving musical vignette presented by **A Place to Be Music Therapy** from Middleburg, VA. The group will present selections from "How Far I've Come," a musical that looks into the heart of its writer, teenager Amy Stone, who sees her Cerebral Palsy not as a disability, but as a gift to teach others about acceptance. The morning plenary session on April 13, "Shifting Gears: The Accelerating Pace of Education Reform and Implications for the Arts," will examine the major social, technological and economic forces shaping today's education environment and its implications for America's 21st century students. The Forum closes with keynote speaker John Merrow followed by a reception and book signing of his latest release: *The Influence of Teachers: Reflections on Teaching and Leadership* (2011).

This year's Spring National Forum is funded in part by the U. S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Arts. Visit aep-arts.org for more information, or call 202.326.8693.

About the Arts Education Partnership

A national coalition of more than 100 education, arts, cultural, business, government, and philanthropic organizations. AEP gathers and analyzes relevant research and policy information, fosters dialogue about what works in arts education, and supports advocacy for improved education policy and practice. AEP was established in 1995 and is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education in cooperation with the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies.

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