



National Arts Policy Roundtable

Summary of Policy Recommendations

Americans for the Arts National Arts Policy Roundtable 2007 *Thinking Creatively and Competing Globally: The Role of the Arts in Building the 21st Century American Workforce*

In the 21st century global economy, the competitive edge belongs to the most innovative businesses—those that flourish in the marketplace by providing creative solutions. Today's business environment is global, knowledge-based, and one of constant change. Recognizing that creativity fuels innovation, business leaders now list *creativity* among the applied skills increasingly necessary for workers at all levels in all industries to succeed in the new economy. Yet, our nation's education system has not adjusted to this economic evolution, remaining largely unchanged since the establishment of the industrial economy. Many other countries, however, are seizing this opportunity to strengthen the 21st century skills of their students by developing creative education programs, which often include increasing the amount of time students spend on arts. This is a deliberate workforce development strategy aimed at capturing a larger portion of the new economy.

With America's economic edge at stake, how can we build a 21st century workforce that is both knowledgeable *and* creative? What role can and will the arts play in ensuring America's primacy as a world leader in innovation and ideas?

In October 2007, 32 leaders from business, government, philanthropy, education, and the arts convened at the Sundance Preserve in Utah to address this issue as part of the Americans for the Arts National Arts Policy Roundtable, entitled *Thinking Creatively and Competing Globally: The Role of the Arts in Building the 21st Century American Workforce*. Established in 2006, the Roundtable is co-convened by Americans for the Arts President and CEO Robert L. Lynch and Chairman of the Sundance Preserve Robert Redford. It provides a forum for national leaders to discuss issues critical to the advancement of American culture, and recommend the public policies, private-sector practices, and research needs that are necessary to move from thought to action.

Roundtable participants focused on the challenge of preparing students to enter the workforce with the creativity and innovation skills needed to compete successfully in the new economy. They agreed that the arts are an indispensable tool for building the creative thinking skills essential to ensuring that American business and culture will prosper.

Members of the Roundtable acknowledged that if the arts are to play a role in helping to build the 21st century workforce, then leaders in the public, private, education, and culture sectors must recognize three fundamental principles:

1. Literacy in the arts is an essential educational goal for the 21st century;
2. The arts both nurture and enhance creative inquiry and innovation, complementing other fields that depend on these applied skills such as math, science, and engineering; and
3. To foster and develop creativity and innovation skills that can be applied in life and work, opportunities for arts learning must begin before kindergarten and continue throughout higher education, as well as in the community and the workplace itself.

To achieve the recognition and understanding of the role of the arts in building a creative workforce, Roundtable participants made recommendations in three key areas: (1) research, (2) messaging, and (3) strategic alliances.

RESEARCH

Build a body of compelling evidence that demonstrates how the arts foster creativity and innovation wherever learning occurs, including pre-K and K-12 schools, higher education, the workplace, and the community.

RESEARCH, EVALUATION, AND DATA COLLECTION

- ★ Conduct a national research study to benchmark the quality and amount of arts education that students currently receive in public schools thus enabling progress to be measured over time (e.g., number of hours, arts disciplines studied, mechanisms for instructional delivery, and arts funding per pupil).
- ★ Conduct a national research study that documents where high-quality arts education programs offered by the nonprofit arts education sector are taking place both during and after school.
- ★ Identify existing studies as well as conduct new research on the link between training in the arts and building creativity and innovation skills. Research should take into account various stages of growth and development, from young learners to adults entering the workforce, to those at later career stages. Demonstrate through this research the practical application of training in the arts to the business environment (i.e., how artistic experiences enhance other fields that require creative inquiry such as science, engineering, or social sciences).

CASE STUDIES AND CURRICULUM DESIGN MODELS

- ★ Identify and develop case studies, curricula, and performance assessment models and tools that show how creativity and innovation skills are developed through the arts at various stages of growth and development (i.e., pre-K through 12, higher education, in the community, and in the workplace).
- ★ Create information dissemination and training opportunities to enable the development of new, or the strengthening of existing, arts education programs that nurture creativity and innovation skills and take place locally in schools, the community, and the workplace.

MESSAGING

Promote the arts as an effective vehicle for cultivating the creativity, innovation, and inquiry skills of all Americans. Emphasize that arts education not only prepares students (pre-K through college) for entry into the workforce, but also fosters excellence among workers at every career stage.

NEW VOCABULARY

- ★ Develop a new, shared vocabulary among the arts, business, public, and education sectors that provides an understanding of how arts education and participation foster creativity and innovation.
- ★ Facilitate a dialogue across sectors with scientists, engineers, designers, manufacturers, healthcare professionals, entrepreneurs, technology leaders, educators, and artists on how the expression of creative abilities in the workplace contributes to a business's competitive edge.

VISIBILITY

- ★ Develop a high-visibility national contest that awards cash prizes for the best curricular design that addresses both (1) how creativity and innovation and skills are fostered, and (2) how the demonstration of these skills by students can be assessed locally.

ARTS AND WORKFORCE PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

- ★ Develop a national awareness campaign targeted at business leaders and policymakers that demonstrates *Knowledge + Creativity = Competitive Edge*.
- ★ Develop and deliver compelling messages—made more persuasive with the participation of opinion leaders and decision-makers—that support the arts in education reform agendas. Share messages in key forums where opinions are shaped. Target traditional national media as well as new media to better reach young people.
- ★ Engage youth in documenting their own creative experiences and in telling the story of how the arts are preparing them for life and work in the 21st century.

STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

Develop strategic alliances with individuals and organizations that are concerned about America's competitiveness in the 21st century global economy and that understand the need for developing creativity and innovation skills in the workforce.

INDIVIDUALS

- ★ Solicit opinions and stories from a variety of people about how arts-based learning contributes to success in their respective fields (e.g., public officials, economists, scientists, engineers, manufacturers, entrepreneurs, health professionals, designers, parents, and other business leaders).

- ★ Use these contacts to build a coalition that actively supports the development of creativity and innovation skills among students and workers, promotes the campaign messages, and cultivates other allies.

ORGANIZATIONS

- ★ Strengthen existing and establish new alliances with influential national organizations in the public, private, arts, and education sectors to identify common purpose, develop a shared agenda, and implement new strategies for global competitiveness and education in the 21st century. Key partners include the following:

Private Sector

- ★ The Conference Board
- ★ Business Committee for the Arts
- ★ National Association of Business Economists
- ★ The US Chamber of Commerce
- ★ The Business Roundtable
- ★ National Association of Manufacturers
- ★ Business Schools
- ★ Young Presidents' Organizations
- ★ Independent Sector

Education Sector

- ★ Council on Foundations
- ★ Grantmakers for Education
- ★ Grantmakers for the Arts
- ★ Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers
- ★ Regional and metropolitan grantmakers

Public Sector

- ★ The U.S. Conference of Mayors
- ★ National Governors Association
- ★ National Lieutenant Governors Association
- ★ National Conference of State Legislatures
- ★ Partnership for 21st Century Skills
- ★ New Leaders for New Schools
- ★ American Association of School Administrators
- ★ National School Boards Association
- ★ National Education Association
- ★ National Arts Education Associations (MENC, NAEA, NDEO, AATE, etc.)
- ★ National Conference of Parent Teacher Associations
- ★ National High School Association
- ★ The Arts Education Partnership



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