



National Arts Policy Roundtable

A Program of **Americans for the Arts**

The Role of the Arts in Educating America for Great Leadership and Economic Strength

2010 BRIEFING BOOK

"The arts can no longer be treated as a frill. Now-- as we move forward with reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act--is the time to rethink and strengthen arts education. I believe education is the civil rights issue of our generation...First, the arts significantly boost student achievement, reduce discipline problems, and increase the odds that students will go on to graduate from college. Second, arts education is essential to stimulating the creativity and innovation that will prove critical to young Americans competing in a global economy. And last, but not least, the arts are valuable for their own sake, and they empower students to create and appreciate aesthetic works."

*Arne Duncan, US Department of
Education Secretary, April, 2010*

Welcome from the Co Conveners ...

This is our fifth Americans for the Arts National Arts Policy Roundtable at Sundance. We founded this Roundtable together in 2006, to bring to the table a wide cross section of people, who care about advancing the arts in our country as much as we do—and are willing to work together to figure out how we can collectively make a difference.

Nearly 100 decision-makers and thought leaders from the public and private sectors have convened at Sundance to address issues such as the future of private sector funding for the arts, the role of the arts in nurturing civic engagement and dialogue, and in building connected global communities. The charge to these thoughtful and creative individuals has been to consider the issue, and work together to identify the strategies needed to move from thought to action.

This year's topic, *The Role of the Arts in Educating America for Great Leadership and Economic Strength*, is important to us all. As a country, we are facing enormous challenges—from the economy to the environment to maintaining our global competitiveness. Overcoming these challenges requires vision, creative solutions—and the know-how to make it happen. Education remains at the heart of whether our young people and our workers will be prepared to meet these challenges head on.

Can the arts play a role? We know they can—and if we are to succeed, we know they must. As more employers recognize the value of creativity and innovation, we must ensure the arts are understood as a critical part of building a workforce steeped in innovative capabilities. With the US facing a 70 percent high school graduation rate, we must create vibrant learning environments that engage students by unlocking their creative potential, and build the confidence that helps them succeed. The arts are not only what is needed to *reform* education—they can *transform* it. Our task is to ensure the policies, practices and resources are in place to bring this vision to reality.

We would like to express our gratitude to the Hewlett Foundation, the NAMM Foundation and The Ruth Lilly Fund of Americans for the Arts for support of the 2010 National Arts Policy Roundtable.



Robert L. Lynch
President & CEO, Americans for the Arts



Robert Redford
Founder, Sundance Institute

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About the 2010 Topic ...

The 2010 National Arts Policy Roundtable focuses on the role of the arts in answering the national imperative to improve education in order to meet the global challenges we as a country face. It responds to an increasing concern of business leaders, elected officials, and citizens about the need to *re-imagine* as well as re-invest in American public education in order to improve workforce readiness, ensure national security, and prepare our students to compete successfully in a 21st century global society.

In many ways, this topic is a culminating reflection of the critical findings and recommendations from previous Roundtables. Whether we were considering the arts as part of the solution to training a more creative workforce, reinvigorating civic dialogue, or bridging international cultural divides, the essential role of the arts in education as a pathway to creating the necessary change invariably became central to the discussion.

Most notably, in October 2007, the 32 public and private sector leaders who convened for 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* affirmed that the arts are indispensable to building the essential creative thinking skills that ensure American business and culture will prosper. They agreed upon 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.
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.

“The Creative Economy... relies upon people who can think creatively, adapt quickly to new situations and problem-solve. This industry, which is growing at a faster pace than total US business growth, increases the demand for workers with the skills that are gained through the arts in education.”

(Governor’s Commission on the Arts in Education: Education Commission on the States, 2006)

With the advent of both a new Administration and the increasing involvement of philanthropy and the business community in education reform has come the opportunity to revisit the federal policies governing education reform and engage with various private sector stakeholders in discussing strategies for invoking change. In engaging in this dialogue, we will probe the role the arts can play in moving America's school systems forward to more effectively meet the needs of a 21st Century competitive workforce and help prepare a more globally aware citizenry.

? Given the opportunities before us—and what is at stake—how do we collectively ensure that the arts become more visible, valued and embedded in the major education reform efforts now underway—in both the public and private sector arenas?

“The Creativity Crisis”

On July 10, 2010, a Newsweek headline provocatively proclaimed the United States was in “The Creativity Crisis”, citing research that shows for the first time in 50 years, there is evidence that American creativity is on the decline¹. The Newsweek article reported that Kyung Hee Kim, a professor at the College of William & Mary, found creativity scores have been consistently inching downward since 1990, after analyzing almost 300,000 Torrance scores of children and adults. The downward scores are more pronounced in younger children in America, from Kindergarten through sixth grade. Among the possible culprits: the number of hours spent watching TV and playing videogames, and the lack of creativity development in schools.

“...other countries are making creativity development a national priority...The European Union designated 2009 as the European Year of Creativity and Innovation, holding conferences on the neuroscience of creativity, financing teacher training, and instituting problem-based learning programs...for both children and adults. In China there has been widespread education reform to extinguish the drill-and-kill teaching style. Instead, Chinese schools are also adopting a problem-based learning approach.”
“The Creativity Crisis” Newsweek, July, 2010

Numerous reports from both business and education continue to suggest a need to rethink how schools are educating children to effectively thrive in work and life in the 21st Century. The 2006 report, “Tough Choices or Tough Times²”, from the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, recommended reshaping the design of American education—or risk losing our global pre eminence.

The report noted that our education systems in the United States were built for an era that no longer exists (the industrial economy of the 20th century)—and our ability to get where we need to be can only happen by changing the system itself.³

Wanted: 21st Century Skills

The 2006 report, *Are They Really Ready to Work?*, issued by The Conference Board, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, Corporate Voices for Working Families and the Society for Human Resource Management, acknowledged the importance of “Basic Knowledge/Skills”—including English language (spoken), reading comprehension, writing, mathematics, science, government/economics, humanities/arts, foreign languages and history/geography—to educating students who will eventually move into the workforce. However, the employers interviewed also placed value on “Applied Skills”—including critical thinking/problem solving, teamwork/collaboration, leadership, creativity/innovation, lifelong learning/self direction, professionalism/work ethic and ethics/social responsibility—as critical to success.

“This is a world in which a very high level of preparation in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, science, history and the arts will be an indispensable foundation for everything that comes after for most members of the workforce. It is a world in which comfort with ideas and abstractions is the passport to a good job, in which creativity and innovation are the key to the good life, in which high levels of education—a very different kind of education than most of us have had—are going to be the only security there is...”

“Tough Choices or Tough Times”, the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce

Employers indicated their belief that over the next five years, applied skills will surpass basic knowledge on the combined list of skills that respondents say will increase in importance—with Creativity/Innovation ranking among the top five.

The IBM 2010 Global CEO Study surveyed 1,500 Chief Executive Officers from 60 countries and 33 industries worldwide, finding that CEO’s believe that creativity helps employees capitalize on complexity. The study also found that creativity is believed to be the most important leadership quality.⁴

Creativity—The Skill Employers and School Administrators Value

In November 2007, The Conference Board and Americans for the Arts in partnership with the American Association of School Administrators conducted a survey of public school superintendents and American business executives to identify and compare their views surrounding creativity. In *Ready to Innovate*, business leaders agreed that innovation is essential to competitive advantage, and are placing greater value on finding and employing creative workers.

But, are the arts being connected to creativity? The findings suggest the answer is yes: Arts-related study in college was found to be a key creativity indicator to potential employers. School superintendents rank the *arts degree* study as the highest indicator of creativity, while employers rank an *arts degree* and *self-employed work* as the top two indicators of creativity. Yet, the study also points out that fewer than 1 in 10 companies reported providing any kind of creativity training options to all their employees. Most high schools offer arts classes on an elective basis only. Creative writing is the sole required course in more than half the districts. Less than 1 in 5 require a music class.

“...both sectors see involvement in the arts and other work experience as markers of creativity...it is clear that the arts—music, creative writing, drawing, dance—provide skills sought by employers of the third millennium.”

Ready to Innovate, Conference Board, 2008

Creativity—The Global Imperative

In a global economy, the cultivation of employee’s minds is more important than ever. Historically, America has held the reputation for producing highly imaginative and innovative minds—in the creative as well as scientific and high tech industries, yet recent studies are casting doubt that we will remain so.

The reality of the global economy is that with the right education, proper motivation and technology, creative workers aren’t bound to specific locations. Knowledge work can take place anywhere in the world. With the world as the hiring pool, the question, posed by the American Management Association, is “will U.S. companies be able to attract top talent from abroad in coming years? And, even if they can, will it be less expensive and more efficient to just create innovation facilities in other nations and utilize the talent there?”⁵

The answer, they say, is that America must be able to do things other countries cannot.

Arts = Creativity = Competitive Edge

The Arts and Impact on Learning and Workplace Skills

Practitioners in arts education witness daily the transformational qualities the arts instill in learners and learning environments. The challenge has always been to provide the hard data and evidence. Responding to this challenge, several major foundations and leading researchers have begun to examine the impacts of arts education on the learner and the learning environment. While results from the studies are promising, the majority of these research efforts are disproportionately “new”, underfunded, and thus lack some of the longitudinal aspects that could significantly bolster our understanding.

Still, empirical studies across the globe have shown promising signs linking the impact of an arts education on other applied, or non-cognitive, skills:

- Students with high arts exposure showed clear evidence of an understanding of ‘multiple or alternative vantage points’.⁶
- Exposure to learning in the arts positively reinforces students’ ability to think critically.⁷
- Significantly higher mean scores on several of the subscales within the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory: truthseeking, maturity, and open-mindedness... these categories are highly aligned with creative exploration and the analysis of ill-structured problems with no obvious solution.⁸ (proactive creativity)

Arts education improves the employability, productivity, and cohesion of the workforce, central issues for a robust 21st century creative workforce, with some evidence suggesting that these non-cognitive skills may be even more critical than cognitive ability in the creative economy.

- “Non-cognitive skills are more valued by some employers than particular technical skill sets. These skills, which include stability and dependability, will be in increasing demand in an economy with a growing service sector.”⁹

In 2006, Scottish Executive Social Research published “Arts and Employability,”¹⁰ which investigated the effect of an arts education on later employability by examining longitudinal data of 11,699 young people. Among the several intriguing and empirical findings include:

- The rate of employment appears higher among young people leaving school at a later stage who took arts subjects, compared to those who did not take arts subjects.
- Students who took at least 2 arts subjects at standard grade tend to have a higher rate of employment than those who took only 1 arts subject.

The data also show that taking arts courses in school even benefits occupations that do not require secondary education:

- Among young people leaving school at the earliest opportunity, employability is generally higher for those that had studied arts subjects.
- Students leaving school at an early stage having taken arts subjects are less likely to find themselves in a negative labor market position 3 years later, compared to the average young person leaving school early.
- Young people that had studied music or graphic communication are amongst the most employable of those that leave school at the earliest opportunity.

The report offers an encouraging assessment of the importance of an arts education to workforce development:

“...The clear link between drama and music and high levels of confidence is an important and positive finding...young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds gaining confidence at school, as demonstrated by drama or music students, are more likely to enjoy higher salaries and enter professional or managerial jobs.”

A Nation Still At Risk: Can the Arts Help?

Impacting Graduation Rates

By virtually every economic measure, high school graduates are better positioned to lead successful adult lives than those who fail to receive their diploma.¹¹ A landmark study of 10-year graduation rates entitled *Cities in Crisis 2009: Closing the Graduation Gap*¹² shows staggering findings on the current status of those graduating in the U.S. Experts say that dropping out of high school affects not just students and their families, but the country overall—including businesses, government, and communities. The Alliance for Excellent Education estimates that high school dropouts from the Class of 2006-07 will cost the U.S. **more than \$329 billion in lost wages, taxes, and productivity** over their lifetimes. Experts say that those who drop out are more likely to be incarcerated, rely on public programs and social services, and go without health insurance than those who graduate from high school.

- Nationwide, nearly one in three U.S. high school students fails to graduate with a diploma.
- In total, approximately 1.2 million students¹³ drop out each year – averaging 7,000 every school day or one every 26 seconds.
- Among minority students, the problem is even more severe with nearly 50 percent of African American and Hispanic students not completing high school on time.
- As of 2006-2007, the national average graduation rate was 68.8% and the top three states with the highest graduation rate were New Jersey (83.3%), Vermont (82.3%), Wisconsin (81%) while the bottom three states were New Mexico & South Carolina tied (54.9%) and Nevada (41.8%)¹⁴.

The *Cities in Crisis 2009: Closing the Graduation Gap* report reveals drop-outs are:

- less likely to be steadily employed
- earn less income when they are employed, compared with those who graduate from high school
- are more than twice as likely to live in poverty, with approximately one-third (37 percent) steadily employed

Given these sobering statistics, can the arts provide a solution?

Studies show that access to arts education in school offers distinct benefits to economically disadvantaged youth and students at risk of dropping out.¹⁵ Strong arts programs can be used as a means to prevent the disengagement that usually predicts dropping out.¹⁶

An 11-year national study that examined youth in low-income neighborhoods found that those who participated in arts programs were much more likely to be:

- High academic achievers
- Be elected to class office
- Participate in a math or science fair
- Win an award for writing an essay or poem.¹⁷

Students at risk of not successfully completing their high school education cite their participation in the arts as a reason for staying in school. The opportunity for students to engage in the arts—through bands and choruses, dance and theater productions, exhibitions of their original art, and publications of original literary and visual work—has always been a strong motivator for students and can play a key role in tackling the graduation crisis.¹⁸

Your Brain on Arts

There is growing evidence that the arts contribute to learning across disciplines—and even to the thought process itself. In March 2008, the Dana Foundation released *Learning, Arts and the Brain, the Dana Consortium Report on Arts and Cognition* a series of studies, conducted by leading neuroscientists from seven prestigious universities.

Over a three year period, the coordinated, multi-university study grappled with the question, “Are smart people drawn to the arts or does arts training make people smarter?”

“[Although] there is still a lot of work to be done... We now have further reasons to believe that training in the arts has positive benefits for more general cognitive mechanisms.”
Dr. Michael S. Gazzaniga,
University of California at
Santa Barbara, March 4,
2008.

The cognitive neuroscientists who participated in the study found a “tight correlation” between exposure to the arts and improved skills in cognition and attention for learning.¹⁹ The groundbreaking, scientific research was conducted by participating researchers using brain imaging studies and behavioral assessment.

Among their major findings include that children motivated in the arts develop attention skills and memory retrieval that also apply to other subject areas.

These, and other findings detailed in the study, advance our understanding of the effects of music, dance, and drama education on other types of learning.

The research was led by Dr. Michael S. Gazzaniga of the University of California at Santa Barbara.

The Consortium identified eight key points relevant to the interests of parents, students, educators, neuroscientists, and policy makers:

1. An interest in a performing art leads to a high state of motivation that produces the sustained attention necessary to improve performance and the training of attention that leads to improvement in other domains of cognition.
2. Genetic studies have begun to yield candidate genes that may help explain individual differences in interest in the arts.
3. Specific links exist between high levels of music training and the ability to manipulate information in both working and long-term memory; these links extend beyond the domain of music training.
4. In children, there appear to be specific links between the practice of music and skills in geometrical representation, though not in other forms of numerical representation.
5. Correlations exist between music training and both reading acquisition and sequence learning. One of the central predictors of early literacy, phonological awareness, is correlated with both music training and the development of a specific brain pathway.
6. Training in acting appears to lead to memory improvement through the learning of general skills for manipulating semantic information.
7. Adult self-reported interest in aesthetics is related to a temperamental factor of openness, which in turn is influenced by dopamine-related genes.
8. Learning to dance by effective observation is closely related to learning by physical practice, both in the level of achievement and also the neural substrates that support the organization of complex actions. Effective observational learning may transfer to other cognitive skills.

This Briefing Book has been written and prepared by Americans for the Arts for the 2010 National Arts Policy Roundtable, Marete Wester, Director of Arts Policy, Jaclyn Wood, Arts Policy Coordinator, and Alicia Mullenix, Arts Policy Intern (Summer, 2010), with contributions by Aimee Fullman and Eulynn Shiu, research consultants.

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Americans for the Arts gratefully acknowledges the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the NAMM Foundation and the Ruth Lilly Fund of Americans for the Arts for support of the 2010 National Arts Policy Roundtable.



About the National Arts Policy Roundtable

The Americans for the Arts National Arts Policy Roundtable is an annual forum of national leaders who serve at the highest levels of business, government, philanthropy, education, and share a willingness to meet and recommend policies critical to the advancement of American culture. Americans for the Arts and the Sundance Institute are co-conveners of the Roundtable. The Roundtable is the pinnacle convening of more than 100 meetings sponsored annually by Americans for the Arts that enable leaders and others to network, share knowledge, and proffer policies. Policies and recommendations from the Roundtable are in turn circulated back to these networks for consideration. The inaugural meeting of the Roundtable took place at Sundance Preserve, October 26-28, 2006, and focused on the future of private sector giving to the arts in America.

About Americans for the Arts



Founded in 1960, Americans for the Arts is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America. From its offices in Washington, D.C. and New York City and via a network of more than 100,000 members and stakeholders, Americans for the Arts works to cultivate strong leadership and increase resources for the arts and arts education while building the case for their integral value in the lives of our citizens, communities and nation.

2010 List of Participants

1. Rebecca Anderson, 2008 YoungArts Winner in Music (Gold) and Presidential Scholar in the Arts (youngARTS artist)
2. Lin Arison, Philanthropist
3. Bob Balaban, Actor/Director/Author
4. Nolen V. Bivens, Brigadier General, US Army (Retired)
5. Eva Blum, President, PNC Foundation
6. Jill Braufman, Chairman, Board of Directors, Center for Arts Education
7. Ian Brennan, Actor, producer, Co-Creator/Writer, Glee
8. Christina DePaul, President & CEO, National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts
9. Kate Davis, 2009 YoungArts Winner in Jazz (Silver) and Presidential Scholar in the Arts (youngARTS artist)
10. Ken Ferguson, Chairman, NBC Oklahoma
11. Marian Godfrey, Senior Director, The Pew Charitable Trusts; Chair, National Arts Policy Roundtable
12. Rachel Goslins, Executive Director, President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities
13. Nora Halpern, Vice President of Leadership Alliances, Americans for the Arts
14. Frank Hodsoll, Hodsoll and Associates
15. Fred Lazarus, President, Maryland Institute College of Art
16. Helen Littlejohn, Senior Regional Public Affairs Specialist (Western States), US Department of Education
17. Mary Luehrsen, President, NAMM Foundation
18. Robert Lynch, President & CEO, Americans for the Arts
19. Tim McClimon, President, American Express Foundation
20. Jill Miller, Managing Director, Sundance Institute
21. Benjamin Pila, 2002 YoungArts Winner in Music (Silver) and Presidential Scholar in the Arts (youngARTS artist)
22. Keri Putnam, Executive Director, Sundance Institute
23. Eulyynn Shiu, Consultant, recipient- Robert Bosch Foundation Fellowship
24. Jonathan Spector, President, The Conference Board
25. Ryan Tarpley, Executive, CAA Foundation
26. Lucy Walker, *film director*
27. Kerry Washington, Actor, member of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities
28. Marete Wester, Director of Arts Policy, Americans for the Arts
29. Harvey White, Chairman, (SHW)2 Enterprises
30. Mary Wright, Program Director, Human Capital, The Conference Board

Endnotes

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