



Arts Education... Now More Than Ever

*"A society grows great when men plant trees
whose shade they know they shall never enjoy."*

- Greek proverb

As we seek to develop the leaders we need for a future we cannot predict, we must ensure that today's children receive the "whole child" education that arts learning provides. Study after study shows that arts education teaches creative problem-solving and cultural awareness; offers multiple pathways to understanding for different learners; and increases connections and engagement between teachers, students, and the connected community that surrounds them.

With "creativity" and "innovation" the new watchwords in almost every career field, these are the skills that are needed to prepare our children for life in the 21st-century. We cannot define a complete education without the arts.

Here in Washington, the arts are already a core component in our state's definition of basic education. We have robust arts education law and policy, and many schools and districts strive to provide a quality arts education for their students in a wide variety of creative ways.

Sadly, good laws and policies don't always mean that goals are being met. They don't ensure that children are getting the complete education they are entitled to, especially when barriers – such as inadequate school funding and limited classroom time for arts learning – get in the way. Good laws and policies are an important foundation for increasing arts education in our schools, but they can't get us to the finish line alone.

To counteract the many challenges facing schools and districts, ArtsEd Washington has developed a unique expertise in two particular areas: providing guidance on taking the first steps to implement new arts programs; and marshalling focused, coordinated support from the local community.

That's why, as we celebrate Arts Education Month throughout May, we will:

- Empower the "connected community" of individuals, schools, districts, arts organizations, and businesses to join together and support the provision of arts education in their local schools;
- Engage school and district leaders in sharing ideas to build their capacity for implementing arts education programs and utilizing community resources;
- Encourage everyone to invite their local decision-makers to experience the power of arts learning first-hand and better understand the value of arts education;

- Increase public awareness about arts education through state-level partnerships, statewide media outreach, and a strategically distributed event report to key decision-makers.

Now more than ever, we need to prepare kids for *their* future, not *our* past. Social commentator and author Daniel H. Pink makes the point in his recent book, *A Whole New Mind*, that while success at the dawn of the Information Age relied on analytical thinking, success in the future economy and society will depend more on having “right brain” skills and abilities such as inventiveness, empathy, and the ability to think conceptually — capabilities developed through arts learning.

We hope you will join us as a sponsor of Arts Education Month, and help empower our schools and communities to provide every child with arts learning opportunities, in every year of their education.

Building the Connected Community

ArtsEd Washington works to build the leadership capacity of every individual to support the provision of arts education in their local communities. We know that first-hand experience with arts education has a powerful impact. But we also know that stepping forward as an advocate for arts education can be somewhat intimidating, if you haven't done it before.

That's why we are creating an online toolkit to increase public awareness and community participation in Arts Education Month. This toolkit will include several templates to encourage grassroots leadership at every level, including a proclamation/resolution request template for local school boards and city councils; a sample press release for local Arts Education Month events; and an invitation template for local decision-makers to attend a school or district's special Arts Education Month events.

We will promote this toolkit through our state-level partners and media resources, as well as our own monthly eNews and website, and coordinate a promotional push at the statewide ArtsTime conference.

Engaging School & District Leadership

Our work with schools and districts through our nationally recognized Principals' Arts Leadership (PAL) program has shown us that school leaders like to learn from educational successes in environments similar to their own. As many principals step forward as instructional leaders in the arts, we want to share their first steps, showcase their achievements, and provide networking opportunities so others can learn and get started.

During Arts Education Month, we will engage school and district leaders to share their ideas and best practices on our new blog, and in a weekly eNews feature to our 1,800+ subscribers. After Arts Education Month, this highlight will be integrated into our monthly eNews distribution schedule and continually posted on the blog.

Arts Education Month “Kick-Off Celebration” Event

At the beginning of May, we'll host an Arts Education Month kick-off celebration in Seattle for 150-200 guests. This evening event will feature a keynote presentation about the benefits of arts learning to the individual, school, and community; focused table conversations moderated by PAL principals and other arts education leaders; and a discussion of the role that ArtsEd Washington plays in supporting arts education throughout the state. We will encourage our constituents to invite and bring their local decision-makers to this meeting, in an effort to create and build their “connected community.”

Increase Public Awareness

ArtsEd Washington will leverage more than 20 regional and state-level partnerships to request Board resolutions and city proclamations in support of Arts Education Month; and increase public awareness of the Month as well as drive traffic to our online toolkit through our partners' eNews, blogs, and websites.

Governor Christine Gregoire will officially proclaim May as Arts Education Month, and Senator Rosemary McAuliffe, Chair of the Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee, will sponsor a Senate resolution in support of Arts Education Month.

At the conclusion of Arts Education Month, we will create a report and distribute through our regional and state-level partners. We will also distribute the report to several key decision-makers, including Governor Christine Gregoire, sponsor Senators, and local and regional media.

We will also promote Arts Education Month through five national level partnerships, including the Kennedy Center and Americans for the Arts.

Arts Education Month by the Numbers

- Participating Schools/Districts: 50
- Participating Organizations: 50
- Participating Businesses: 10
- Kick-off Celebration Event Attendance: 150-200
- Sponsor Exposure via Email Promos (#sends x #subscribers): 9,000
- New eNews Subscribers Joining: 100
- Proclamations/Resolutions: 15-20
- Percent Increase in Website Traffic During April-May Compared to 2008: 15%

The Importance of Corporate Sponsorship

Corporate support of Arts Education Month is a crucial piece of the puzzle. Schools will not be completely successful without the full support of their students' families as well as their "connected community," and that includes local small businesses and large corporations alike.

You are the employers in our communities. *You* are the ones who benefit from a well-educated and prepared workforce (or suffer when qualified employees can't be found). According to a 2007 Conference Board report, school superintendents (98%) and corporate leaders (96%) overwhelmingly support creativity as increasingly important to the U.S. workforce. Corporate human resource managers have said that they need employees who are creative, problem-solving innovators — self-starters who are resourceful, practiced at collaboration, and eager to be lifelong learners.

And yet, according to Washington Learns, Governor Christine Gregoire's task force on education (2006), Washington State's schools are not producing these types of high-level employees. One-third of the adult population has only a high school diploma or less. The younger working age population is less educated than their older counterparts. We have been importing educated workers from other states and nations to fill our best jobs.

ArtsEd Washington strives to be the rising tide to lift all boats. We want ALL schools in our state to succeed in delivering the best possible education to our students – one that include arts education. By supporting our work during Arts Education Month, you are investing in your future workforce, and your future community.