The Kennedy Center

KCAAEN

Arts Education Advocacy Tool Kit

KENNEDY CENTER ALLIANCE FOR ARTS EDUCATION NETWORK

The Kennedy Center

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Introduction

Why Advocacy Matters: A Snapshot of Today's Challenges for Arts Education

Arts Education continues to face serious challenges. Despite model programs, studies, and research that demonstrate the value of arts learning, national education policies and budget constraints continue to put arts education programs at risk of being reduced or eliminated.

Although the arts were named as a core academic subject in 2001 (*The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, No Child Left Behind*), the Center for Education Policy reported in 2006 that 22 percent of school districts surveyed had reduced instructional time for the arts to make more time for math and reading—the subjects that are tested. Keeping the arts in the school day is one of today's critical advocacy challenges.

As school systems across the country face funding challenges and budget cuts, arts education programs are among the first to be threatened or eliminated. Many schools are forced to choose among a music teacher, visual arts teacher, librarian, guidance counselor, or nurse on staff. Many districts resort to asking communities to pass levies to help ease the financial burdens they face. Finding funding for arts education programs is another critical advocacy issue.

At the same time that school districts are reducing or eliminating arts education programs, a December 2007 national poll of American voters indicated that 80 percent of the respondents felt it was important or extremely important for schools to develop students' imagination, innovation, and creative skills. In addition, 88 percent said the arts were essential for doing so and were a sound educational investment (see full report at www.theimaginenation.net).

Despite these challenges, successful arts education programs are thriving in some communities across the country. Where arts programs thrive, students are learning in the arts with high engagement, expressing ideas in a variety of arts languages, and engaging in creative and reflective work. We also see students learning through the arts—meeting objectives in both an art form and another subject area and constructing and demonstrating understanding in highly creative and personal ways. But quality arts programs don't thrive on their own. One of the keys to their success has been the active involvement of arts advocates with a powerful and strategic message.

What does it mean to be an arts education advocate? According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, an "advocate" is "one that pleads the cause of another; one that supports or promotes the interests of another." Arts education advocacy pleads the cause for young people across the nation to have the opportunity to learn in and through the arts.

Arts education advocates know that the only way even strong arts learning programs can survive is when advocates actively promote their cause. Advocates help make the programs' value and impact understood and supported by all stakeholders—from parents, to community leaders, to school district administrators, to state legislators, federal policy-makers, and others.

Now more than ever, the challenges facing arts education must be met. Arts education advocates who work at the community, state, and national levels must act to promote the value of arts learning for all young people.

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Arts education advocacy pleads the cause for young people across the nation to have the opportunity to learn in and through the arts.

Arts Education Advocacy Tool Kit

The Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network (KCAAEN) has created this Arts Education Advocacy Tool Kit as a resource for those interested in developing the knowledge, skills, and habits to be effective advocates, at whatever level and degree of commitment they are willing to make. The Tool Kit focuses on three major topics:

1) the habits of effective arts education advocates,
2) the power of coalitions and networking, and
3) the components of an effective arts education advocacy plan.

Whether you are new to advocacy or have been working for many years to secure a solid place for arts learning in your community, this Tool Kit will help to improve your advocacy skills.

The Habits Of Effective Arts Education Advocates

Effective advocates have habits of action that are the foundation for their success. Developing these habits will enhance your ability to influence change.

- Habit 1: Know Your Beliefs
- Habit 2: Make Advocacy a Daily Priority
- Habit 3: Gather, Verify, and Share Information
- Habit 4: Be Organized and Responsive to All Communications
- Habit 5: Create and Use a Working Agenda
- Habit 6: Understand that Advocacy is Time-Sensitive: The Calendar Rules
- Habit 7: Take Advantage of the Opportunities Offered by Candidates Seeking Public Office
- Habit 8: Build Long-Term Relationships
- Habit 9: Choose Advocacy Roles Consistent with Your Knowledge, Skills, and Commitment

Your beliefs should be the guide for your actions.

Habit 1: Know Your Beliefs

Effective arts education advocates know their beliefs or principles. It is impossible to advocate for something unless you know what you believe in and can clearly articulate it.

Knowing your beliefs helps you differentiate between what is sacred and what can be compromised. Advocates hold fast to their beliefs but recognize that at times they may need to be flexible in their advocacy positions. You can assess the appropriateness of a recommended compromise to see if it is consistent with or contrary to your principles. If the compromise undermines your beliefs/principles, you can seek an alternative. Your beliefs should be the guide for your actions.

EXAMPLES

There is a wide range of valid beliefs about arts education. Some examples are provided below:

Arts for their Own Sake

- Experience in dance, drama/theatre, music, and visual arts helps to create well-rounded citizens who understand the historical context of the arts and the role the arts play in their daily lives.
- The arts develop well-rounded citizens who can analyze and respond to a variety of works of art from the perspectives of creators, performers, and audiences.
- In order to function in tomorrow's world, students must be able to decode images, sounds and symbols. Literacy in "text" is not enough. Students will need the ability to analyze and evaluate visual and aural messages and make critical judgments. Training in the arts builds these essential interpretive skills.[1]

[1] Bill Ivey, Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts, 1998.

Arts for Learning

- The arts can reach a diversity of learners. Not every child learns in the same way. The arts by their very nature embody multiple learning modalities—visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/tactile—helping all students learn.
- When arts content is connected to content in other subject areas (such as math, language arts, science and social studies) through mutually-reinforcing objectives, student learning deepens in both areas. Students learn to see the connections and big concepts across disciplines.
- The arts help make abstract concepts more concrete and understandable. For example, math concepts such as symmetry, reflection, rotation, are more easily understood when students can explore them through dance/movement. In social studies, the study of the arts and world cultures helps students understand the diverse world we live in.
- The arts (dance, drama/theatre, music and visual art) enhance the learning process for all young people. The systems they nourish, including integrated sensory, attentional, cognitive, emotional, and motor capacities are, in fact, the driving forces behind all other learning.[2]

Life Skills

- The arts develop lifelong skills of critical and creative thinking, problem solving, collaboration, reflection, and persistence.

21st Century Skills

- Arts experiences that develop skills of communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity are needed for students to succeed in the competitive global economy and work place.

Multi-Cultural Understanding

- Arts experiences that build students' appreciation of their own cultural heritage and the commonalities and diversity across cultures are essential to understanding our interconnected world.

The Arts and Cognitive Growth

- Schools have an obligation to involve children in the arts at the earliest possible time and to consider the arts as fundamental—not optional—curriculum areas, because arts experiences build cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor pathways [in the brain].[3]

School and Classroom Culture

- The arts can transform the school and environment for learning—making schools places of collaboration and discovery.[4]

[2] Jensen, Eric *Arts with the Brain in Mind*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, (2001): p. 2.
[3] Sousa, David A. *How the Brain Learns*. Thousand Oaks: CA. Corwin Press, 2006: 214-215
[4] Sousa, p. 220

Personal and Interpersonal Connections

- Arts experiences help students connect to themselves and each other.
- Creating art is a personal experience—students draw upon their own understandings and resources to produce the result.[5]
- The arts develop young people's abilities to express their personal vision and communicate it to others.

To Sustain Democracy

- "The challenge to American education has always been to raise citizens who are capable of active participation in the social, cultural, political and economic life of the world's longest experiment in democracy, an experiment demanding a free, educated and committed citizenry. We were amazed to discover anew the role of the arts in realizing that vision and creating that democracy. That is why we offer it as a compelling reason to fully embrace the arts in our schools. It's how to sustain our democracy."[6]

RESOURCES

- Excellent data and translations of research into useful arguments for expanding arts education are presented by the Arts Education Partnership at www.aep-arts.org
- Research-Based Communication Toolkit from National Association of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) includes three resources:
  - *Section I: The Arts and the Creative Workforce* http://www.nasaa-arts.org/nasaanews/arts-and-learning/rbc-toolkit-section1.pdf
  - *Section II: The Arts and Literacy Development* http://www.nasaa-arts.org/nasaanews/arts-and-learning/rbc-toolkit-section2.pdf
  - *Section III: The Arts, Cognition, and Social Development* http://www.nasaa-arts.org/nasaanews/arts-and-learning/rbc-toolkit-section3.pdf
- *Build Your Case Database*
  SupportMusic Coalition
  www.supportmusic.com/public/index.php
- *Music Makes the Grade: Music Programs Contribute to Higher Attendance and Graduation Rates*
  MENC: The National Association for Music Education and NAMM: International Music Products Association
  www.menc.org/documents/legislative/harrispoll.pdf
- Report—*Creative Industries: Business & Employment in the Arts*
  Americans for the Arts
  www.americansforthearts.org/information_services/research/services/creative_industries/default.asp

Habit 2: Make Advocacy a Daily Priority

Effective arts education advocates understand that advocacy is a daily, ongoing responsibility and plan time for it. Although they are busy with their daily responsibilities, they know that every day, some unanticipated *big thing* tends to come up. They make it a habit to block out "contingency time" each day for advocacy activities such as collecting information or responding to an action alert.

[5] Sousa, p. 220
[6] Deasy, Richard J. Lauren M. Stevenson. *Third Space: When Learning Matters*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership, 2005: preface, xiv

Habit 3: Gather, Verify, and Share Information

Your advocacy is only as good as your information. Effective advocates gather and verify information on subjects that are *relevant in any way* to arts education. They keep their antennae raised to identify valuable information from a wide range of resources and share the information widely. Having current information at their fingertips helps advocates take advantage of spontaneous advocacy opportunities, be alert to potential challenges, and choose appropriate actions.

GATHERING INFORMATION

For effective advocates, the news is like air. They can't survive without it. On a daily basis, they gather relevant information from radio, television and Internet news. They mark favorite media Web sites and subscribe to online newspapers, journals, and clipping services to gain local, state, national and international perspectives. In addition, they listen regularly to sources that are likely to offer opposing views so they can anticipate concerns and sharpen their arguments.

It is your job to read and listen to the news. Framing a local matter in a national context can help others to see the big picture. It's up to all of us to be informed so we can draw those connections.

In today's world, we have instant access to a variety of resources on the Internet. By simply using a search engine, typing in an area of interest, and skimming the numerous "hits" that result, we can read, review, and select information to support arts education. Reviews, reports, and surveys inform our thinking. Read (or at least skim) research reports and surveys, even if they relate, only indirectly, to your area of interest. Often, reports from other interest groups and organizations can help us imagine new possibilities or connections. For example, we might find a science program that has implications for arts education. By making it a habit to gather information, we obtain the knowledge required for our advocacy work.

Develop the habit of collecting facts rather than opinions. Look for data about the number of children involved in programs, the costs, and the outcomes. Document the program's effects. Arts programs are one of the most cost-effective expenditures of public funds, and, with the right data, you can demonstrate impact and quality.

VERIFYING INFORMATION

Conducting research and collecting data empower advocates and give credibility and validity to views about arts education. You can uncover helpful facts and figures to support your case, but failing to verify them before acting can be embarrassing or even undermine efforts. Rather than accept information at face value, effective arts education advocates approach newspaper articles, polls, surveys, and reports with a healthy skepticism—they ask questions and seek clarification. For example, did the local newspaper include all the important information? Did the governor really say that or could she have been misquoted? Does the data actually support the conclusions? Could the results be interpreted differently?

Your advocacy is only as good as your information.

Effective advocates know which sources can be trusted to support their messages with facts. They know which organizations disseminate data-based research which is carefully articulated, checked, and ready to roll out. They rely on organizations such as the Kennedy Center, Americans for the Arts, the Arts Education Partnership, and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. State Alliances for Arts Education routinely share information with their constituents via print and electronic newsletters. The Kennedy Center provides State Alliances information on the Web site (www.kennedy-center.org/education/kcaaen) and through a monthly e-newsletter. Many organizations also share the latest research, news, legislative action, and quotes about arts education through regular email communications.

SHARING INFORMATION

One of the most powerful things advocates do with information is to organize and share it. When arts education advocates share the results of their information gathering with others, they become a valued resource for policy-makers and other advocates. For example, a state legislator may want to support an arts education proposal, but needs student data to justify that support. You can help by providing current statistics and a bulleted list of talking points that support the proposal.

In addition, effective arts education advocates develop the habit of providing individuals and organizations they hope to persuade with easy access to resources they have developed, such as data, reports, quotes, images, and talking points. Advocates organize information in ways that make it easy for others to use.

Sometimes, the very thing we don't know will be a topic of discussion with a legislator or legislative aide. It is okay to say that you need to do a little more research and will get back in a timely manner with the answer. By being honest, you demonstrate integrity.

Habit 4: Be Organized and Responsive to All Communications

Being organized is critical to effective advocacy. Effective arts education advocates have habits that keep information flowing and manageable. They are good information organizers and respond to requests in a timely way.

Effective arts education advocates use systems that help them to navigate in a swelling sea of information. Each of us has a different method of organization that suits our needs. Whatever method you prefer, use it every day. Act on all messages you receive, sorting them according to the action required. You may:

- **Refer** information to others
- **Adapt** information for other uses
- **Act Now** on information
- **Act Later** on information
- **File** information
- **Delete** information

Effective arts education advocates also make it a habit to save copies of their correspondence as records of their work and refer to it later when the same or a similar issue emerges. What may seem to be finished business today may emerge again in some new form. By keeping records of correspondence you will be ready to resume the conversation.

One of the most powerful things advocates do with information is to organize and share it.

Habit 5: Create and Use a Working Agenda

Arts education advocates are most effective when they create and use a working agenda—a prioritized list of tasks, persons responsible, and a corresponding timeline. The agenda makes it easier for people to work with you by clarifying what needs to be done, organizing the tasks in manageable increments, and identifying needed resources.

A working agenda changes with time. Action items under each broad category change with the calendar, the political season, ongoing developments, or a lack of them. A working agenda allows advocates to concentrate on what is pressing at the moment and to plan for what is coming next.

Keep in mind that some items on the working agenda will need to be done quickly as particular issues arise, while others will need to be attended to on an on-going basis, such as gathering information, collecting personal stories, developing networks and allies, and creating contact lists of individuals, groups, and media.

Habit 6: Understand that Advocacy is Time-Sensitive: The Calendar Rules

The policy-making process is time sensitive. Effective arts education advocates know the steps of the process and when they occur. For example, if your goal is to influence the school district, you need to know when the budget is developed. If your goal is to influence the appropriations process at the legislative level, you need to know when hearings are scheduled and when budgets are debated.

LOCAL LEVEL

Effective arts education advocates plan their local actions according to the school district's budgetary cycle. When the school year is fresh and the budget is being formed for the next school year, advocates begin to gather information and develop reports that support funding needs.

Consider how the following generic example of a school district's budget cycle would guide an arts education advocate's timeline for action:

Spring

- Preliminary budget is published.
- All school district personnel must be informed by a specific date if they will not be re-hired. The date is usually dictated by a collective bargaining agreement.

Summer

- Preliminary budget is approved.
- Budget hearing is held.
- Final budget is approved.

In the spring, between the time the preliminary budget is published and the date for teacher contracts, advocates must move efficiently and most likely with an eye toward compromise. This is an excellent time to call in expert testimony and to facilitate solutions.

Note, too, that approval of the preliminary budget and public budget hearings are held in the summer when schools are closed and people are busy with other things. In addition, the time between introduction of the preliminary budget and the date for final approval is short. Effective arts education advocates ensure that the people and information are prepared and ready. Once a final budget is approved, what's done is done. It's time to start working on the next budget.

STATE LEVEL

State budget cycles are dictated by law. Effective arts education advocates refer to the official state Web sites to get the legislative calendar, a description of the budget process, legislators' committee assignments, and the schedule of pertinent committee meetings.

Arts education advocates in states that schedule annual Arts Advocacy Days make it a habit to take advantage of the opportunity to visit their state legislators to discuss the importance of arts learning. These advocates recognize that Arts Advocacy Days offer opportunities to further their knowledge, skills, and state-wide networks.

FEDERAL LEVEL

Effective arts education advocates also work together to influence policy, practices, and budgets at the federal level. They pay close attention to the federal budget cycle and plan ways to influence decisions.

RESOURCES

- The National School Boards Association provides state-specific information www.nsba.org/SecondaryMenu/StateAssociations.aspx
- The National School Boards Association provides information about School Board protocols and tips for communicating with local school boards www.nsba.org/
- National Association for Gifted Children *Federal Advocacy: How a Bill Becomes a Law* http://www.nagc.org/index2.aspx?id=598

Habit 7: Take Advantage of the Advocacy Opportunities Offered by Candidates Running for Political Office

Election years are full of opportunities for advocacy about every cause, including arts education. Effective arts education advocates make it a habit to work in a non-partisan way with candidates from all political parties. The goal is have your issue included in each party's platform and for it to become a topic that candidates include in their public statements.

Effective advocates help candidates support arts education issues. They provide candidates with information and statistics about local programs as well as comparisons with other successful programs. Advocates help candidates articulate their support for arts learning in concise, clear statements that will be of interest to a wide range of constituents. (Candidates rarely oppose arts education. More often, there is an absence of any position.) Advocates communicate to candidates the number of voters who care passionately about the quality of their children's arts experiences.

Effective arts education advocates also make public each candidate's position. They survey candidates with straightforward questions about their positions on arts learning and distribute the survey results during the heat of the election cycle. When candidates take a position that has negative implications for arts education, advocates provide relevant information to challenge their position.

RESOURCES

- North Carolina Center for Non-Profits
  What Non-Profits Can and Cannot Do in an Election Year
  www.ncnonprofits.org/advocacy/election-year%20article.pdf
- Alliance for Justice
  Election Year Advocacy
  http://www.afj.org/assets/resources/nap/election-year-advocacy-candidate-forums.pdf
- Communication Tools for Advocacy
  National Association for Gifted Children
  www.nagc.org/index2.aspx?id=594
- U.S. Department of Education
  http://www.ed.gov
  Information and budget updates
  www.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/performance.html

Habit 8: Build Long-Term Relationships

Effective arts education advocates continually look for opportunities to solidify relationships and establish new ones that enlarge their sphere of influence. They recognize the critical importance of developing ongoing, meaningful relationships with local, state, and federal decision-makers—any elected official such as mayors and other city officials, school district superintendents of instruction, local supervisors and city council members, school board and arts council members, and state and federal members of Congress.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEGISLATORS

The job of legislators is to stay in touch with and represent the interests of their community. By determining their priorities and concerns, advocates can explore how messages promoting arts education fit into the complex array of competing interests that legislators are trying to serve.

Whether or not there is pending legislation or a budget issue directly affecting arts education, effective advocates take time to develop rapport and lines of communication with key local, state and federal legislators. At each legislative session, advocates find friends of arts education among the legislators and set about making new friends. Habits of establishing or maintaining ongoing relationships help advocates ensure that arts learning is represented right from the start, whenever important issues are raised for education, such as curriculum, instruction, assessment, and graduation requirements.

As education issues become more complex, many elected officials have staff members that coordinate the flow of information on a topic. As a result, developing relationships with well-informed staff is also critical. Staff members, in district and state offices responsible for keeping up with issues important to constituents, often make local visits or attend meetings. Plan to contact the staff person responsible for education issues and ask for a meeting to discuss arts education, or invite the staff person to visit a program in advance of inviting the legislator. Regular, thoughtful communications help develop relationships and can leave a positive impression with officials and their staffs.

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MEDIA

Developing ongoing relationships with reporters in the local media is a critical habit. Arts education advocates must become trusted resources on arts education issues that media representatives can turn to when they need a story or an insider perspective.

Find out which media sources the public relies on for information on arts, education, and culture. Cultivate a relationship with these reporters, writers, radio hosts, bloggers and local TV personalities. Stay in contact and give them information that piques their interest. Invite them to see arts education programs in action. Connect them to charismatic educators, students, parents, legislators, business and community leaders. Regularly send them information on work being done in your community, pending legislation, the latest arts education research, awards programs, concerts, exhibitions, etc.

Habit 9: Choose Roles Consistent with Your Knowledge, Skills, and Commitment

Effective arts education advocates understand the various roles advocates play as well as the degree of knowledge, skill, and commitment needed to carry out each role. Every person taking action can make a difference. Some individuals are more comfortable working on their own, while others are ready to work as part of a network, and still others are ready to assume leadership positions. Whatever role you choose, you can make a difference.

ADVOCACY—THE POWER OF THE INDIVIDUAL

There are many ways individuals can serve as arts education advocates. At its most basic level, advocacy begins when someone speaks to another person about the importance of arts education. For example, arts educators who involve students in performing concerts or plays or creating visual art exhibitions, are advocates when they describe to the audience how students created the work, the knowledge and skills they gained, and the attitudes they developed. Classroom teachers are advocates when they show the school principal the increased student engagement in learning during a lesson that integrates history and theater. A parent who testifies at a School Board meeting about the impact of arts learning on her child's education is also an arts advocate.

Advocacy efforts are strengthened when we work in collaboration with others to affect policies and programs impacting arts learning.

Checklist for Individual Advocates

- ☐ I stay informed about school, district, state, and national initiatives and conduct research on arts education.
- ☐ I inform colleagues, parents, neighbors, family members, friends, and others about the importance of arts education and local, state, and national initiatives.
- ☐ I speak to the principal at my school about the value of arts learning and what the current school programs need.
- ☐ I invite decision-makers, the media, and supporters to attend student performances and arts events.
- ☐ I recognize the contributions decision-makers have made to my school or district.
- ☐ I send decision-makers copies of newsletters, press releases, and articles about arts education.
- ☐ I thank decision-makers for their support.

ADVOCACY—THE POWER OF NETWORKING

When advocates work with other groups, they form alliances. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines an alliance as "an association to further the common interests of the members." Advocacy efforts are strengthened when we work in collaboration with others to affect policies and programs impacting arts learning.

Checklist for Advocates Who Network

- ☐ I belong to an arts advocacy network (e.g., KCAAEN, the State Alliance for Arts Education, and Citizens for the Arts).
- ☐ I respond to action alerts.
- ☐ I gather information about arts learning and share it with others in my network(s).
- ☐ I join others to work on local, state or national initiatives on arts learning.
- ☐ I identify one parent, community member, or arts educator who will also write letters, articles, or make phone calls supporting arts education.
- ☐ I phone, write, or email decision-makers regarding arts education issues.
- ☐ I make personal contacts with my legislators, members of the State Board of Education, and policy-makers in my community and state.

ADVOCACY—THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP

Arts education advocates with knowledge, skills, and a high level of commitment assume leadership roles and accept the responsibility for organizing the efforts of individuals and networks in an effort to reach an advocacy goal.

These advocates often work at the state and national levels joining forces with one or more arts advocacy organizations as well as organizations that share related missions. They are active in annual State and National Arts Advocacy Days and meet with elected members of the House of Representatives and Senate to share their arts education message.

Checklist for Advocacy Leaders

- ☐ I organize our networks to advocate for arts education.
- ☐ I recruit other arts advocates in the community or profession.
- ☐ I reach out to those who do not support arts education.
- ☐ I establish and sustain professional relationships with decision-makers and members of the media.
- ☐ I write letters and articles for my local newspaper on a consistent basis.
- ☐ I appear on radio and local television talk shows to promote arts learning.
- ☐ I meet with or contact decision-makers on a regular basis.
- ☐ I testify at legislative committees or State Board of Education meetings.
- ☐ I work at the state and national levels on arts education policy issues.

How Strong Are Your Advocacy Habits?

How strong are your advocacy habits? Whether you work individually, in a network, or in a leadership position, the habits of action are keys to your success. Use the following checklist to assess your habits.

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF YOUR ADVOCACY HABITS

- ☐ I can articulate my values and beliefs about arts learning.
- ☐ I make time each day for my advocacy work.
- ☐ I regularly gather and share information relevant to arts education.
- ☐ I check that my information sources are reliable.
- ☐ I develop and use personal systems for organizing information.
- ☐ I respond in a timely way to all communications.
- ☐ I prioritize tasks by creating and regularly updating my working agenda.
- ☐ I know when to say, "I don't know. Let me find out."
- ☐ When candidates are running for office, I know how to maintain a stance of non-partisanship and take advantage of advocacy opportunities.
- ☐ I build long-term, meaningful relationships with decision-makers and their staff members.
- ☐ I establish long term, helpful relationships with members of the media.
- ☐ I accept advocacy responsibilities that are consistent with my knowledge, skills, and level of commitment.

Coalitions and Networking

Why Coalitions and Networking?

A variety of advocacy strategies are needed depending on whether an issue is singular (such as convincing a principal to be more supportive or helping parents understand the need for more resources) or systemic (such as academic offerings for students, programmatic needs and resources, or increasing budgets).

Individuals can be effective advocates for singular issues. In contrast, it requires a network of people with a range of skills (such as the ability to conduct research, draft policy, navigate the policy-making process, and assess budgets) to advocate for more complex, systemic issues.

Although it is unlikely everyone in a coalition will agree on every issue, you will find some issues that all can agree to act on together to achieve greater impact.

Extending the Network

In addition to working with natural allies (such as arts and arts education organizations, arts educators), arts education advocates benefit by extending their networks to those in other fields with whom they share common interests (such as those in other academic content areas, health care providers, and advocates for incarcerated youth).

PARENTS

Parents can be natural allies for our cause. In some communities, parents, grandparents, other family members, foster parents, or legal guardians are well organized through associations, school site councils or through informal social networks. These groups can be mobilized, highly visible, and vocal in promoting arts learning opportunities for young people. In other communities where parents are less formally connected, advocates must begin to establish networks.

Quality, access, and equity matter to parents. They are deeply invested in their children's success and care about the quality of education their children receive. Parents want their children to have access to every opportunity to learn and to advance in school, work, and life. No parents want to feel that their child has less access to opportunities or is receiving a lower quality education than other children. By extending the network to parents, the voice for arts education is strengthened.

STUDENTS

Although we often tap students to perform or display evidence of their arts learning, we sometimes overlook them as constituents to be cultivated as part of arts education advocacy efforts. Any student enrolled in school—elementary, middle, high school, alternative school, public, private, charter, virtual or home school, college or university—is a potential ally in advancing arts learning.

Students' first-hand knowledge about what is happening in their schools and communities makes them excellent advocates. They know how the arts positively impact the school environment. They know what resources and program improvements are needed.

As you think about ways to approach students to extend your network of allies, you can build on their desire to be part of a group and their interest in connecting with like-minded peers. Many students are members of formal and informal associations and networks and are increasingly well connected to each other via the Internet, social networking sites, and other media.

BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Business and community leaders are influential people within the community who wield power and have access to valuable resources. When advocates identify business and community leaders who might join arts education advocacy efforts, they can cast a wide net across many sectors—health, human, and social services; commerce, tourism and real estate; business and community development; government,

law enforcement, parks and recreation; and cultural, philanthropic and religious organizations. Business and community leaders are usually highly-visible spokespeople actively involved in shaping public opinion. Many have roots deep in the community and can tap into large existing networks, such as Rotary clubs, Chambers of Commerce, associations, employee groups, corporate foundations, and unions. This is a wide-ranging group; they have a vested interest in the growth and well-being of the community and as a result, share a concern about young people and education. The goal is to engage business and community leaders in using their positions to influence decision-makers and become spokespeople and advocates for learning in and through the arts.

ENLISTING UNLIKELY ADVOCATES

In addition to working with supporters and allies, effective arts education advocates reach out to some unlikely advocates—those who share a particular concern, and as a result, see the value of working together to help get the message out.

Look for those whose agenda intersects with yours—a Chamber of Commerce leader who needs capable workers for the 21st century workplace will recognize how arts learning develops students' creativity and ability to collaborate. A health/physical education leader in your state Department of Education concerned with combating childhood obesity may be an ally for advocating for funding for dance/movement education. A mayor looking for positive press for the community may be an ally for advocating for funding a highly-visible, award-winning arts program. A social service organization interested in helping troubled youth may be an ally when you advocate for drama programs in after-school settings.

CHECKLIST OF PARTNERS

Allies

- ☐ Local, state, and national professional arts education associations, for example Music Educators National Conference (MENC), National Art Education Association (NAEA), National Dance Association (NDA), and American Alliance for Theater and Education (AATE)
- ☐ Local, state, and national arts agencies and organizations
- ☐ Arts educators
- ☐ Cultural institutions
- ☐ Community arts organizations
- ☐ Teaching artists
- ☐ Local and state organizations
- ☐ Other:_____

Potential Allies

- ☐ Local and state teachers' unions
- ☐ Local and state school board associations
- ☐ Local and state PTAs
- ☐ Local and state administrators' associations
- ☐ Local and statewide organizations that address children's issues
- ☐ Print and broadcast media, public television
- ☐ Educators (other than arts educators), current and retired
- ☐ Artists and private arts teachers
- ☐ Arts-related businesses
- ☐ Higher education faculty in education, arts, and arts education
- ☐ Students
- ☐ School administrators
- ☐ Community groups
- ☐ Business leaders
- ☐ Local civic leaders
- ☐ Other: _____

Arts education advocates benefit by extending their networks to those in other fields with whom they share common interests.

TO DO LIST

Connect with Other Networks

- ☐ Professional organization of arts teachers
- ☐ PTA or other parent organization
- ☐ Booster club
- ☐ Students with an interest in the arts
- ☐ Local arts council
- ☐ Citizens for the Arts
- ☐ Administrators

Find New Allies

- ☐ Find out which programs are being funded by the state arts council. Identify some potential arts education allies.
- ☐ Identify allies already working with other arts organizations.
- ☐ Identify leaders in the local arts and cultural organizations.
- ☐ Add organizations to your mailing list that are not one of your identified allies.
- ☐ Ask each ally to brainstorm a list of potential new allies. Invite new allies to talk about mutual interests and how you might help each other achieve arts education related goals.

Extend Relationships

- ☐ Pay close attention to local and state news issues—who needs your help and who can help you?
- ☐ Offer to write a short advocacy update for another organization's newsletter.
- ☐ Write thank-you notes to those who have supported past efforts.
- ☐ Get to know the School Board members and their concerns.
- ☐ Meet your State Board of Education representative to discuss arts education.

Creating An Effective Arts Education Advocacy Plan

Change doesn't occur by chance. When it does occur, two related conditions are usually present. First, there is a broad-based organized coalition working in conjunction with policy-makers who support change. Second, the actions of the coalition are guided by a strategic plan consisting of an honest and realistic appraisal of the political "lay of the land."
An advocacy plan answers these questions:

- What is the issue?
- What is your goal? What are you trying to achieve?
- What information do you need to make your case?
- Who do you want to influence? Who is your target audience?
- What is your message?
- How will you target the message?
- How will you deliver the message?
- What is your timeline? What resources will you need?
- How will you assess your success?

As you work through this section of this Advocacy Tool Kit, answers to these questions will become clearer, your plan of action more complete, and your advocacy more effective.

An issue is not the same as a message. It is critical to determine the issue before jumping to the message.

What is the Issue?

An advocacy plan begins with a focus on the issue. The issue can be overarching (such as the importance of arts learning for all students in a state) or it can be specific (such as loss of arts education programs in a particular school, a district policy on graduation requirements, education or arts education legislation, or a need for after-school arts programs). Find out the current policies on the local and state levels relevant to the issue.

Keep in mind that an issue is not the same as a message. It is critical to determine the issue before jumping to the message.

What is Your Goal? What Are You Trying to Achieve?

In the advocacy plan, goals—what you hope to achieve—are articulated. You may have substantive goals (e.g., secure a policy change) or process goals (e.g., introduce a bill for purposes of organizing support and solidifying the cohesiveness of a newly-formed coalition).

Identifying the goal gets the advocacy campaign started, unifies the members of the existing network, forms the basis for expanding the network, helps guide the coalition on the appropriateness of a given strategy or tactic, and serves as the basis for judging success. It is essential that the coalition identify and reach consensus on the "prize." At the end of the advocacy campaign, what does the coalition hope to accomplish? For example, is the "prize" an incremental step that lays the foundation for subsequent action; a new or expanded program; increased funding for an existing program; a more informed and supportive community; a bill or a public law; a policy change; securing enactment of an existing policy; getting the issue on the policy radar screen; or ensuring implementation of a law?

What Information do You Need to Make Your Case?

The next step in the advocacy plan is to gather objective information that will help make the case. Collect specific data (e.g., numbers of students affected, costs) and results from studies and research. The information should be evidence-based as opposed to opinion-based. Gathering information about successful programs in other communities may also be helpful for comparison purposes. Also collect relevant information about the current status and past history of policies and programs as well as the likely opposition to your goal.

CURRENT STATUS

Local Level

- What opportunity for arts learning is offered in the school? School district?
- What is the duration and frequency of these offerings?
- Which/how many students are reached? Not reached?
- Are arts classes taught by certified/licensed arts educators?
- Is there an arts graduation requirement in your district?
- Are there any arts education policies at the school district level?
- Is arts learning assessed at a school district level?
- Are arts grades counted in the students' GPA?
- What are the current and past funding levels?

State Level

- What are the arts education policies at the state level?
- Are arts education programs assessed at the state level?
- What are the current and past funding levels?

PAST HISTORY

- What is the history of arts education curriculum and programs in the community? Have they increased or decreased over the years?
- What caused the change?
- What were the strengths/challenges in prior arts programs?
- What were the previous funding levels?

LIKELY OPPOSITION

- What will be the likely opposition to your goal? What are the arguments?
- What information is needed to counter the arguments?

Who Do You Want to Influence? Who is Your Target Audience?

An arts advocacy plan identifies the policy-makers that have the power to make decisions about your issue. The potential audience of local, state, and federal decision makers is broad. It encompasses any appointed or elected official representing the community such as school district administrators, school board members, local, state, and federal legislators, and the governor. The plan identifies key power brokers who have the respect of and can influence the policy-makers for or against your position, as well as influential public figures and members of the media.

Policy-makers are inundated with constituents and interest groups that identify problems and proposed solutions. Getting a policy-maker involved does not occur by chance. It takes a concerted effort. Help policy-makers get involved:

- Describe how arts learning connects to a keen personal interest of the elected officials or staff members.
- Convince elected officials that sponsorship or involvement will result in positive publicity and will transform them into a heavyweight—a "player."
- Organize interest groups to contact elected officials to endorse your proposal for action.
- Obtain an endorsement from experts and opinion leaders respected by elected officials.
- Arrange for constituents who have political power, personal relationships or are campaign contributors to make calls to policy-makers.
- Ask constituents to send handwritten correspondence, and to attend and speak at open forums in policy-makers' home districts.

What is Your Message?

Advocates can cite countless reasons why a quality arts education is essential for every young person. The challenge is to select which information is the most appropriate to support each advocacy message.

All messages should be crafted with the following principles in mind:

- **Messages should not assume prior knowledge of arts education.** Messages help inform and educate your target audiences. Be aware that audiences may or may not be aware of the importance of arts education or the status of the arts at their child's school or district. They may be unaware of what a quality arts education entails and may have never been engaged in the arts. Avoid using special terms/jargon that may be unfamiliar.
- **Messages must be simple and direct and state what you want.** The message must be easy to understand and remember, and communicate what you are asking for. For example, do you want your Senator to sponsor a new piece of legislation to support arts education funding? Do you want the president of your Chamber of Commerce to sponsor an arts education forum for other business leaders?
- **Messages should personalize the issue.** Messages should inspire audiences by using personal profiles that help advance the goal. By including authentic voices and real life stories, you can personalize the issue and mobilize target audiences to take action.
- **Messages should communicate that the change is do-able and reasonable.** Be clear that the desired outcome is reasonable (not radical), viable, and can be implemented.
- **Messages must reflect current priorities.** Ensure your message reflects current values, concerns, priorities, and trends. This enables advocates to frame and deliver arts education messages more effectively in a larger context.

RESOURCES

- Idaho Commission on the Arts
  Key Messages for Advocacy
  www.arts.idaho.gov/advocacy/atool.aspx?pg=3
- *California Arts Advocacy Toolkit*
  Public Service Announcement
  www.californiaartstoolkit.com/_doc/sample_psa.pdf

How Will You Target Your Message?

Each audience requires a message that is targeted for their interests and needs. Your research, planning, and preparation are critical. Invest the time to know and understand each distinct audience. According to Ben Cameron, Program Director for the Arts of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, advocates should "speak from where your audience is listening," tapping into key priorities, interests, opinions or needs to make your case. You must know what information—data, quotes from influential people, personal stories, images, performances, research, etc.—will be convincing and memorable to a particular audience.

TARGETING MESSAGES

Consider these guiding questions when you begin to target your message:

- Who is the target audience?
- What matters most to this audience? What do they care about?
- What arts education messages will be most important to them?
- What supporting information do they need to hear?
- Where do arts education goals/interests intersect with theirs? Could arts education be important to them?
- What are we asking of them?

TARGETING MESSAGES TO POLICY-MAKERS

Since much formal advocacy work is ultimately directed at policy-makers, do your homework to determine which message will resonate. Knowing their background and personal interests gives you clues about ways to target the message. From their perspective, how would arts learning help them reach their goals? Are they concerned about issues beyond education? Can you make the connections between arts education and other issues such as economic recovery, creative industries, artist communities, or entertainment zones?

In framing messages for policy-makers, the trick is standing out in a crowd of important and sometimes competing concerns. Remember, policy-makers are concerned with the entire city, school district, state or region that they represent. The ability to connect your messages on arts education with other interests and needs will help policy-makers help you. They rely on facts. Be prepared to share data on the impact of arts learning. This will help policy-makers envision the results of their decision-making and leadership.

TARGETING MESSAGES FOR PARENTS

Parents are interested in their children's future. Your message should help parents draw connections between quality arts learning and their children's future success.

TARGETING MESSAGES TO STUDENTS

Students are interested in being successful. They aspire to improve their lives, build on the success of their families, use their talents, and have opportunities to express their unique vision. Your message should stress how full and equal access to all the possibilities of arts learning will help students reach their full potential.

TARGETING MESSAGES TO BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Business leaders may be particularly interested in connection between arts learning and workforce development. Make the school-to-work bridge evident. As employers who see the "end product" of our educational system, business leaders will be interested to learn about the ways the arts build 21st century workforce skills, creativity, and innovation. Business leaders want quality schools so they can attract the best employees. Business and community leaders are interested in how the arts contribute to the local economy and how the arts improve the quality of life in communities.

TARGETING MESSAGES TO THE MEDIA

Media outlets work in a competitive market where the public has many choices for obtaining news, information, and entertainment. By helping the media uncover the kinds of stories that will appeal to their audiences, you can gain the kind of coverage your messages deserve. Arts education programs can yield fascinating personal interest stories that embody important community issues. They connect with a range of areas—arts and culture, education, entertainment, community, community development, business, youth, and personal interest news. Research the target audience for media outlets in your community and target your messages accordingly.

How Will You Deliver Your Message?

There are many ways to deliver a message. Some delivery mechanisms reach a wide audience while others are more targeted. Some messages are strongest when they are delivered face-to-face; other messages are best delivered in print, on the Web, or on film. Many times, messages are strongest when multiple delivery mechanisms are planned. Your challenge is to select the most appropriate, powerful, and effective delivery method.

THE MEDIA

Gaining access to the general public through the media is always a key component of any advocacy effort for several reasons.

The media can help create a positive impression about your issue and they can help garner the attention of policy-makers. If elected officials read an article in the newspaper or see an issue on television, they are more apt to pay attention to it. Additionally, the media have the power to move the arts education agenda into the public arena and affect public opinion.

Today's media includes print (newspapers, magazines, reviews, etc.) and increasingly online sources (Web sites, Podcasts, and blogs). Your media contact list should also include professionals working in television and radio. Like policy-makers, most media sources have staff members assigned to arts, education and/or cultural issues. Writers, reporters, editors, bloggers, and radio and media personalities have many options for stories, features, and interviews, but must manage many competing priorities.

Many times, messages are strongest when multiple delivery mechanisms are planned.

Some delivery strategies to consider:

Personal delivery
- Telephone calls
- Meetings
- Workshops
- Presentations to groups
- Messages connected to attendance at arts performances and exhibits

Print/Newspaper
- Letters to decision-makers
- Newsletters
- Letters to the editor
- Articles for newsletters of potential allies
- Media releases
- Annual update reports

Radio
- Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- Media releases
- Interviews

Electronic
- Emails
- Newsletters
- E-news alerts
- Media releases
- Web sites
- Blogs
- Social networking sites
- Podcasts

RESOURCES

Templates for Media Releases, Media Alerts, and Photo Captions
- www.supportmusic.com/kit/contents/6.MediaCommunicationsTemp.doc (English)
- www.supportmusic.com/kit/contents/6a.SP_MediaCommunications.doc (Spanish)

Sample Public Service Announcements (PSA)
- www.californiaartstoolkit.com/_doc/sample_psa.pdf
- www.supportmusic.com/kit/ (focused on music)
  Six 30-second PSAs on the benefits of music education featuring students and musical artists. Not for TV Broadcast

What is Your Timeline? What Resources Will You Need?

To get an advocacy plan up and running, three factors must be taken into account:
- the timeline for message delivery
- the timeline for local, state or federal budget decisions
- the resources—financial, personnel, range of expertise—needed to implement the strategies

Developing a timeline and gathering resources will vary from community to community and state to state. In planning your timeline, refer to the information available on government Web sites about sessions, bills, and budget timelines as well as procedures related to the policy-making process. The State Alliance's calendar will impact your planning process as meetings are scheduled, goals and messages formally adopted, and public statements are made.

How Will You Assess Your Success?

ALONG THE WAY

Throughout the course of any advocacy effort, it is necessary to continually review the effectiveness of strategies and tactics in relationship to the overall principles and goals. Once a strategy is in place, coalition members should be open to change, but at the same time, resist overreaction. The major question should be whether strategies for reaching the goals are still appropriate and timely.

AT THE END

You did it. You planned, conducted research, gathered your friends and made new ones, and took action, either personally or as part of a network. Now it's time to celebrate your success, thank your supporters, and reflect on your experience.

To what extent were you able to meet your goal? For example, did you accomplish:

- Passage of a bill just as you would have it written?
- Inclusion of language in a policy that supports arts learning?
- Education of a key group of stakeholders to better understand the value of arts learning?
- Development of new partnerships and advocates for arts learning?
- An increase in financial support for arts learning initiatives?
- Movement towards achieving a policy change?
- Placement of an issue on the public radar screen?
- Engagement of new allies?

BEFORE YOU BEGIN AGAIN

Remember that success does not always come in a neatly wrapped package. In fact, it often comes with a new set of issues to be resolved. Before you begin on the next task, take some time to strengthen the relationships that have been built. Remember to say thank you to those who helped with the work—the advocates, the behind-the-scene workers, and the policy-makers. Many times after the passage of legislation, legislators report that no one calls or writes to thank them. Express your gratitude. Remember, even if you didn't get what you asked for, you educated people, made connections, and found opportunities to promote arts education.

Consider helping others by sharing what you've learned from your experience.

- Share results of your work with other State Alliances as a replicable effort.
- Capture your successes in a document that can inform future work.
- Write about your success for inclusion in a newsletter, such as the Kennedy Center National Partnerships *UPDATE*.

RESOURCES

- *Smart Chart*, a free online tool to help non-profit organizations create and implement communications plans (Spitfire Strategies, Washington, DC) www.smartchart.org
- *Arts Education Advocacy Kit*, New Mexico Arts, Sante Fe, NM www.nmarts.org/pdf/artsedadvocacy_kit.pdf
- *Let's Make A Plan to Support Arts Education!*, Ohio Alliance for Arts Education http://www.oaae.net/download/ADVOCACY/Let's%20Make%20a%20Plan.pdf

Conclusion

This Advocacy Tool Kit was prepared to help State Alliances plan, strategize, and carryout effective advocacy on behalf of young people in their states. Now more than ever, as arts education continues to face challenges to its survival, we must develop and sustain a network of advocates to work at the local, state, and national levels to deliver the message about the importance of arts learning for all young people.

As you move from the planning table, to networking meetings, and to the public podium, make use of the habits of effective advocates, develop strong networks, and plan and implement effective advocacy plans. The ideas and resources included in this Tool Kit will support your efforts to make arts education a reality for all young people—today and in the future.

A companion video for this toolkit is available at www.kennedy-center.org/education/KCAAEN/resources/home.html

Appendix

Networking with State Advocacy Organizations

- **Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network (KCAAEN)**
  Many states have an Alliance for Arts Education that is a part of the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network (KCAAEN). These organizations support the KCAAEN's mission to advance learning in and through the arts for all students. www.kennedy-center.org/education/kcaaen

- **Citizens for the Arts**
  Many states have Citizens for the Arts organizations which are arts advocacy groups that provide a statewide network of experienced advocates with which to connect. These organizations assist in gathering information about House and Senate representatives in the state as well as their voting records. To find a listing of State Citizens organizations visit: www.artsusa.org/get_involved/advocacy/saan/018.asp

Example: Short Advocacy Statement

If you want to grow your confidence, we suggest you create a 30-second sound bite that you can deliver on stage or at a dinner party.

I support arts education because it is part of the solution to our state's tough economic times. We have more than 18,000 arts related businesses that employ more than 88,000 people. I know, people are always shocked at these high numbers. The arts mean business! These arts related businesses need creative thinkers, problem solvers, and team players—arts education contributes to all of these qualities. The arts are a part of the solution.

Example: Testimony

Within conversations or testimony supporting arts education you will find opportunities to include your own story that personally connects you to the persons in your audience. For example, an arts education advocate testifying before the house education committee about the need for and value of the arts as part of a complete education might say something like this:

Mr. Chairman, my name is [x] and I'm a parent at [name] School District. My purpose today is to share with you the current research and data from our school district that supports the inclusion of arts education as part of a complete education for all children. We know that our research and its results will empower you to also support arts education for all of the children in our state. We know the changes in our district have been dramatic and were put into place for a relatively small investment that we find to be sustainable. The complete research report is in your packet and I will only highlight two findings here today in respect for the stated time allotment for individual testimony.

1) *Education: The inclusion of arts education in our daily curriculum resulted in increased regular attendance by students. Two years ago our average daily absentee rate was 14%. This past year, with the inclusion of arts education, dance, drama/theatre, visual art, and music, we saw the absentee rate fall to 3%. The only change between the two years was the addition of arts education in the curriculum. Student test scores in state mandated tests increased by 10% and moved our district from Continuous Improvement labeling to Effective. While it was not part of the school's research, we also saw parent participation as tutors, class room observers, and audience members increase by 50%. The parent involvement increase was a bonus in our efforts to increase learning through the arts.*

2) *Culture: The inclusion of arts education in our daily curriculum has provided opportunities for the children to study different cultures in and through the arts. When my son studied Africa it was more than a trip to the library and writing a report. It was learning dance and understanding its connections to traditions and families. He learned through visual art, too. He made a tapestry and studied the traditions of weaving fabric. While it was not part of the research being conducted, we discovered that the children were more tolerant of their classmates from different cultures. The conversations at my own dinner table were more global and we all learned about people, places, and traditions that we would have otherwise never talked about.*

In closing, I want to say that I understand the needs we face in our state in all areas of education and government. I understand that you have difficult decisions to make about what will and will not be funded in tough economic times. And I hope through the research and data I've provided in my packet and my testimony today that funding for arts education in the overall education budget will be increased. The arts and arts education are part of the solution. Thank you for this opportunity to testify and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have for me or provide additional information once you have reviewed the packet of information.

Tips for Writing to Your Legislators

House and Senate members welcome your correspondence (letters or emails). Constituents provide valuable information that help legislators make decisions. Consider these tips for writing to your legislator:

- Correspondence should be brief and specific
- If writing about a particular piece of legislation, include the bill number
- Express your appreciation for the legislators' time and actions on your behalf
- Request a response to your correspondence
- Include your name, mailing address, telephone number, and email address

Sample Letter to Request an Appointment with a Federal Legislator

The Honorable [name]
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr./Mrs. [name]:

Arts education advocates working with The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts national education programs will be in Washington, DC on February 5th. While in the Capitol, a delegation from [state], including members of [state] Alliance for Arts Education and Kennedy Center Partners in Education teams respectfully request a brief meeting with you to share information regarding the value of and need for public funding for the arts and arts education.

We would like the opportunity to thank you and to share information about the impact of investments in [state's] arts education organizations made possible through the Kennedy Center, National Endowment for the Arts and U.S. Department of Education. Arts education, and its impact on our economy and families, is vital for building strong communities in our state.

Thank you for considering my request for a brief meeting with you on the morning of [day], [date, year]. I look forward to hearing from your office to confirm the appointment. I can be reached by telephone at my office: [phone number], on my cell: [number], by email at [email address], or by fax at [number].

I will be departing for Washington on [day], [month, day] and hope that I will hear from you prior to that time regarding the appointment I've requested. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
[Name]
[Title]
[Organization]

Sample Letter to Request a Meeting with a State Legislator

The Honorable [Name]
[State] House of Representatives
[Address]

Dear Speaker [name]:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the State Alliance for Arts Education, I respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss [bill] in regard to arts education funding for schools as part of the state's education budget. During our meeting, I will provide compelling information that will assist you in making an informed decision about this bill and its impact on children in our state.

Please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience to set a meeting date, time, and location. As always, thank you for your time and attention to our request and your steadfast work to support the arts and arts education for all children.

Sincerely,
[Name]
[Title]
[Organization]
[Address]
[Phone number]
[E-mail address]

Tips for Visiting a Legislator or Legislative Staff

- Make an appointment well in advance
- Prepare a list of talking points to cover during the meeting
- Arrive on time, be prepared to wait
- Introduce yourself by name and organization
- Bring materials describing the Alliance (brochure, catalog, etc.) to leave with the legislator
- Be prepared to meet anywhere–in an office, hallway, or lobby
- Deliver talking points in a respectful and relaxed manner
- Answer questions. If you don't know the answer, say so and offer to find out and provide the answer after the meeting
- Leave materials you prepared for use by the legislator or staff
- Thank the legislator or staff member for the meeting
- Follow up with a thank-you note and include any information promised during the meeting

Tips for Presenting to Your Local School Board

- Determine the date of the school board meeting and the policy for public participation
- Provide a courtesy call or email to the President of the School Board or Superintendent of Schools to let them know that you intend to speak during the public participation portion of the meeting
- Prepare a list of talking points that can be covered in three to five minutes
- Arrive on time, if appropriate sign-in
- When it is time for public participation, walk to the podium with your talking points
- When welcomed, state your name and review your talking points with the members of the Board of Education, not the audience
- Answer any questions asked by members of the Board or Superintendent
- Ask for follow up by the Board President on any actions taken by the Board that relate to your concerns/ideas
- Thank the Board and Superintendent for their time and consideration of your concerns/ideas

Factors that Support Arts Education: How Does Your District Rate?

The following are factors that indicate a district-wide commitment to quality arts education programs for all students. These factors were identified in a research study conducted by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and the Arts Education Partnership, and published in *Gaining the Arts Advantage*.[7]

Determine how your district rates in its support for high quality arts education programs by rating your district on the following scale for each factor below:
0 – does not meet the criteria
1 – somewhat meets the criteria
2 – meets the criteria

FACTORS THAT SUPPORT ARTS EDUCATION:

_____ Influential segments of the community shape and implement arts education policies and programs.
_____ The board of education sets a supportive policy framework and environment for the arts.
_____ The superintendent articulates a vision for arts education.
_____ The district has implemented a comprehensive arts education program aligned to my state's arts standards.
_____ There has been continuity in leadership to implement a comprehensive arts education program.
_____ An arts education coordinator facilitates district-wide programs and support for arts education.
_____ School principals support district policies for arts education for all students.
_____ Policies and practices support professional development for teachers of the arts.
_____ District leaders develop relationships with parents and community to ensure support for arts education.
_____ Strong elementary arts programs create a strong foundation for system-wide arts programs.
_____ Student needs in the arts are met through specialized programs (magnet schools, AP classes, etc.)
_____ District leaders use national and state policies and programs to bolster local support for arts education.
_____ The district promotes reflective practices at all levels to improve quality.

__0__ TOTAL

19–26 Most Effective
9–18 Moderately Effective
0–8 Least Effective

How does your district rate? What can you do to be a "Most Effective" district?

- What leadership skills, policies, resources, and data are needed to improve arts education in your district?
- Will your board, superintendent, and administrators make arts education a priority?
- What strategies will you use to make arts education a priority in your district?

The following strategies may be helpful to improve the quality of the arts education programs in your district and school.

- Urge your local board of education to adopt your state's Academic Content Standards for Fine Arts.
- Implement assessments in the arts aligned to standards in the arts.
- Develop performance indicators to measure student achievement in the arts.
- Include arts achievement on your school's and/or district's Local Report Card.
- Use the arts as a strategy to close the achievement gap among students.
- Work with parents, colleagues, and community members to sustain support for the arts in your school and district.
- Involve state lawmakers and policy-makers in the arts in your district.
- Make a personal commitment to advocate for the arts at the local, state, and national levels.

[7] *Gaining the Arts Advantage: Lessons from School. Districts That Value Arts Education*
President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999

Web Resources

Americans for the Arts
1000 Vermont Avenue, NW, 6th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
202.371.2830
www.artsusa.org

Arts Education Partnership
C/O Council of Chief State School Officers
1 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20001
202-326-8693
www.aep-arts.org

Dance/USA
1156 15th St. NW, Suite 820
Washington, DC 20005
202-833-1717
www.danceusa.org

Educational Theatre Association
2343 Auburn Ave.
Cincinnati, OH 45219
513-421-3900
www.edta.org

Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network (KCAAEN)
John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
2700 F Street
Washington, DC 20566
202-416-8817
www.kennedy-center.org/education/kcaaen/

MENC (National Association for Music Education)
1806 Robert Fulton Drive
Reston, VA 20191
703-860-4000
www.menc.org

National Dance Education Organization
4948 St. Elmo Ave., Suite 301
Bethesda, MD 20814-6013
301-657-2880
www.ndeo.org

National Art Education Association
1916 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091-1590
703-860-8000
www.naea-reston.org

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
1029 Vermont Avenue, NW, 2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20005
202-347-6352
www.nasaa-arts.org

NAMM, The International Music Products Association
5790 Armada Drive
Carlsbad, CA 92008
760-438-8001
www.namm.com

Partnership for 21st Century Skills
177 North Church Avenue, Suite 305
Tucson, AZ 85701
520-623-2466
www.21stcenturyskills.org

Kennedy Center
Alliance for Arts Education Network

Kennedy Center
Alliance for Arts Education Network