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Seismic Shifts in the Education Landscape: What Do They Mean for Arts Education and Arts Education Policy?

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The field of education in the United States is in a period of unprecedented change. Educators in all disciplines are challenged to understand and respond to the waves of reform sweeping over the national education landscape. Linking these reforms to meaningful outcomes that will produce more rigorous and effective measures of quality and performance in our schools is an ongoing goal for all educators as they work to respond to calls for educational reform. Changes in the general field of education have direct implications for arts education policy and practice. Arts educators find themselves in the position of making sense of these landmark reforms and changes in the context of arts education and determining what courses of action and responses they should pursue on the road to meaningful reform. This report provides an overview of a selected number of contemporary developments in the general field of education, brief summaries of consequential studies and education-related reports, and an examination of some policy issues these developments and reports raise for arts educators as they work to shape the future landscape of arts education.

Keywords: arts education, arts education advocacy, arts policy, assessment, Common Core Standards, national visual arts standards, No Child Left Behind, teacher evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Education in the United States has experienced upheaval of historic proportions in the past two and a half decades. Accepted educational paradigms have been challenged by internal and external forces. Cries from the public for educational accountability, combined with the varying political, economic, cultural, technological, and social agendas of politicians, business leaders, educators, and others, are driving these changes. Leaders in the United States today are fixed on the objective of gaining dominance in the world through an educational system that has been charged with being unresponsive, outmoded, misguided, nonproductive, antiquated, and self-serving. Alarming reports about the decline of American students' performance on standardized measures of academic achievement continue to provide ev-

idence of the apparent failure of our educational system. As a result, the United States finds itself tumbling in world rankings of educational achievement. For many, this decline poses a threat to our national security, economy, democratic way of life, and American leadership in the world.

What follows are descriptions of a number of issues, factors, and influences on the contemporary education landscape. Much has been written and discussed about each of these factors, but for the sake of clarity and a broader perspective, in-depth reporting and interpretations of these factors will not be included here. Following identification of these factors, brief summaries of recent significant studies and reports that have shaped and guided the evolutionary pathway of contemporary arts education are provided. Discussion of these factors and of the selected studies and reports is not intended to be exhaustive, nor does it claim to provide conclusive resolutions to the problems that face the field of education today. The following discussion will attempt to portray the educational landscape upon which the field of arts education exists and to describe the forces that are influencing, directing, and fueling the development of future arts education.

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Arts Education Advocacy

As a result of the number of seismic shifts that have occurred in the field of education, arts educators often find themselves grappling with an ongoing advocacy challenge to demonstrate how arts education relates to the development and support of broad and changing educational goals and outcomes. Arts educators are tasked with presenting arguments that can justify the existence of arts education in our schools. Moreover, they must provide convincing evidence that the outcomes of arts education are compatible with broader national educational goals and objectives and are supporting learning in other disciplines in the curriculum. Unquestionably, such demonstrations should be required of all disciplines; however, arts education continues to be targeted as a peripheral subject in a comprehensive education, even though the federal government has clearly identified it as a core learning subject that should be included in a comprehensive education.

Hetland et al. (2007) suggest that arts education provides a unique skill set and habits of mind that are valuable in and of themselves. They also contend that these outcomes contribute to learning in other disciplines. The skills that they claim arts education introduces, develops, and refines include the ability to develop craft; engage and persist in a task; envision, express, and find a personal vision; observe; reflect; stretch; explore; and understand the art world and art community.

Eisner (1998; 2002) contends that arts education is a necessary element of a comprehensive education for all students. He recommends that a broader definition of literacy is needed for understanding the role education plays in creating a literate person. Eisner suggests that the arts are deeply rooted in cognition and representation and deeply involved in how education expands and deepens the kinds of meaning people have in their lives. He suggests that arts education is valuable as a stand-alone discipline and does not need to be justified in terms of how it contributes to learning in other disciplines. In support of this belief, Eisner (2002) puts forward a list of the ten lessons that education in the arts teaches. They are:

1. The arts teach children to make good judgments about qualitative relationships.
2. The arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution.
3. The arts celebrate multiple perspectives.
4. The arts teach children that complex forms of problem solving are seldom fixed, but change with circumstances and opportunity.
5. The arts make vivid the fact that neither words in their literal form nor number exhaust what we can know. The limits of our language do not define the limits of our cognition.
6. The arts teach students that small differences can have large effects.
7. The arts teach students to think through and within material.
8. The arts help children learn to say what cannot be said.
9. The arts enable us to have experiences we can obtain from no other source and through such experience to discover the range and variety of what we are capable of feeling.
10. The arts' position in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults believe is important.

These and other arguments are still being made today to establish the integrity of and need for quality arts education in our schools and communities.

Neuroscience Discoveries

Recent discoveries in the field of neuroscience have garnered a great deal of attention in the field of education. Neuroscientists are exploring the workings of the human brain in order to uncover how the brain decodes information and uses it to learn. Benjamin Bloom and many other cognitive scientists have identified taxonomies of learning and higher-order thinking skills. Discoveries of neurological pathways used in learning have enabled educators to use these pathways to shape learning experiences and develop assessment mechanisms that require learners to demonstrate their uses of these pathways in solving problems and in linking various realms of knowledge and skills in producing creative responses to problems.

A number of scholars and researchers have focused their examinations on neurological functions used in the visual arts. Eric Jensen, in his groundbreaking work *Arts with the Brain in Mind* (2001), suggests that engagement in the visual arts requires utilization of more of the brain's capacities and greater integration of knowledge and skills obtained from the study of other disciplines than does engagement in other disciplines.

Jonah Lehrer, in his books *Proust Was a Neuroscientist* (2008) and *How We Decide* (2009), suggests that individuals routinely use the higher-order thinking pathways and methods employed by artists and designers in identifying various aspects of problems, testing solutions to problems, and making decisions about them. He suggests that artists, through the fantasies and fictions that make up their art, raise existential questions about truth and the nature of truth. Scientists, by contrast, attempt to objectively describe the universe, imagining a perfect reflection of reality: They operate under the assumption that they can solve every problem through the application of their scientific understanding of the universe. Believing that the universe is nothing more than a mass of vibrating molecules, scientists assume that by understanding these molecules, we can understand the whole. Artists, by contrast, suggest that truth is relative and that reality is based on individual truths. Truth begins with us. Lehrer concludes

that science depends on art to produce its possibilities and that artists depend on scientists for affirmations of their truths. Science needs art to frame the mystery, but art needs science so that everything is not a mystery. Neither truth alone is our solution, for “our reality exists in plural.”

Robert and Michele Root-Bernstein, in their thought-provoking book *Spark of Genius: The 13 Thinking Tools of the World's Most Creative People* (1999), suggest that a number of Nobel Prize-winning scientists and others who are known for their creative discoveries in a wide range of fields regularly engaged in creating works of art. Root-Bernstein and Root-Bernstein report that while engaging in artistic creation, these geniuses were able to make cognitive and creative leaps that led to discoveries that might not have been made had they not accessed the habits of mind and neurological pathways upon which engagement in the arts depends.

In the field of arts education, a number of scholars have written about cognition and its role in the creation and study of works of art. Dorn (1999), Efland (2002), and Eisner (2002) have described the uses of human cognition and cognition's relationship to the visual arts. They put forward comprehensive arguments detailing the various functions and processes that are routinely introduced, developed, and refined through instruction, learning, and production in the visual arts. They suggest that thinking about and making art are intelligent behaviors and explain how higher-order thinking and problem-solving activity function in the act of creative formation.

Creativity

Creativity has always been valued in American society. “Yankee ingenuity,” for example, has long been a hallmark of our national psyche. In attempting to understand the dynamics of the current world economy, a number of writers have suggested that creativity is one of the principal characteristics that has enabled the United States to maintain its leadership role in global economic development. In a recent *Newsweek* article, Bronson and Merryman (2010) report that American students' creativity test results on the Torrance tests of creativity steadily increased from 1962 to 1990. Since then, they have steadily decreased. It is too early to determine why these declines are happening. Some suggest that there has been little effort to develop and nurture creativity in our schools. Around the world, other countries are making creativity development a national priority. Idea generation and problem-based learning approaches have been adopted to foster creativity development in students.

In his groundbreaking book *A Whole New Mind*, Daniel Pink (2006) suggests that the future of the United States and the world is dependent upon the creative responses that people can produce to problems and needs of the world. Pink argues that because of globalization, we are moving from an economy and society built on the logical, linear, computer-like capabilities of the Information Age to an economy and

society built on the inventive, empathic, big-picture capabilities of what he calls the “Conceptual Age.” He contends that the Conceptual Age depends upon the complementary functions of “left-brain” and “right-brain” capabilities. He suggests that the linear, sequential thinking that occurs in the left brain must be accompanied by the holistic, creative thinking that occurs in the right brain. Pink further suggests that design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning are the “senses” that will guide our lives and shape our world in the future. Arts education classrooms and programs encourage these “senses” and give them license for expression.

Andreasen (2005) uses modern neuroscience to explore how the brain functions during the creative process, suggesting that geniuses may be able to tap into the unconscious mind in ways that most of us are unable to do. She outlines a number of factors that contribute to the presence of creativity in the brain. One of the factors she identifies as fostering the development of creativity and the expression of creative responses to problems is social environment. Andreasen details how Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo's creative outputs were positively influenced by the prevailing social environment of Renaissance Italy, a period during which creativity and innovation were highly sought and rewarded by patrons and society.

In his book *The Flight of the Creative Class*, Richard Florida (2005) suggests that the United States is in danger of losing its most crucial economic advantage: its status as the world's talent magnet. Florida argues that the United States is only one of many places where cutting-edge innovation occurs. He suggests that the world is actively searching for highly creative individuals and that many foreign businesses and governments are enticing creative individuals to come to work in their nations in order to increase their competitive edge in the world economy and support the development of their nations. In Florida's view, continued economic development is dependent on what he calls the 3-Ts: technology, talent, and tolerance. He posits that when these characteristics are teamed up with human creativity, positive growth and solutions to global problems can result.

In *Explaining Creativity: The Science of Human Innovation* (2006) and *Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration* (2007), psychologist Keith Sawyer suggests that creative output and creative response are enhanced through the processes used in collaboration. Sawyer contends that collaborative creativity is superior to individual creative responses. Furthermore, he argues that creativity is always collaborative, even when expressed by solitary individuals. He goes on to build the case for how creativity and collaboration drive innovation, expand creative capabilities, and empower creative problem solving in the fields of business, politics, science, and education.

Creativity has long been a key component and, for many, a hallmark of arts education programming. The ability to formulate creative responses to artistic problems has been a consistent expectation of arts learning. Zimmerman (2009)

addresses the need to reconceptualize creativity in the arts classroom and suggests a new definition for creativity. She contends that “researchers and practitioners need to conceive of creativity as multidimensional with consideration of how cognitive complexity, affective intensity, technical skills, and interest and motivation play major roles” (394).

Creativity traditionally has been expressed in works of art, and its manifestation in arts classrooms is likely to remain a goal of all arts education programs.

Alternative Licensure of Teachers

With increasing numbers of students in American schools, the retirement of the baby boomer generation, and alarming rates of teachers leaving the profession, American schools find themselves with a growing need for highly skilled teachers. Schools and states have been forced to seek alternative means through which to build and increase the nation’s teaching force. Many states have taken steps to enable individuals with undergraduate degrees in a specific discipline to take a limited number of pedagogical courses and then enter the teaching force. Alternative teacher licensure models have been implemented with mixed results. Preliminary studies of teachers who entered the teaching profession through alternative licensure models have been inconclusive; however, it appears that as many as 60 percent who enter teaching through alternative certification programs leave the profession by the third year (Berry 2001; Darling-Hammond 2001; Sabol 2004)—a rate far higher than that recorded for those who enter the field through traditional preservice career pathways. Suffice to say that more study is needed of alternative licensure systems and those educators who enter the teaching profession through them.

Student Assessment

With the passage of No Child Left Behind in 2002, assessment of student learning became the fulcrum around which U.S. education turns. Learning assessment has always been part of the educational landscape as far back as the days of Thorndike (1926) and others (Cronbach 1942; Cronbach 1946; Meier 1927; Wechsler 1958), but in the past decade, assessment has arguably become *the* focus of teaching. Terms like “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) and “high-stakes assessment,” to name only a few, have become common jargon within education, and “teaching to the test” has become the norm in our schools. Student assessment results have become such a central indicator of learning that many current teacher evaluation models require that student test scores be included in the data submitted for evaluation of individual teachers. Teachers report spending increasing amounts of time developing assessments; scoring assessments; processing assessment data; and analyzing assessment data for programmatic, curricular, and instructional purposes (Sabol 2010).

Assessment in the arts is fraught with challenges that other disciplines need not address. Traditional assessment methods

often fail to explore the most significant kinds of learning taking place in arts classrooms, such as growth or sophistication of thinking and development of problem-solving or creative thinking pathways. Other aspects of student learning in the arts are elusive and difficult to characterize in rubrics and work samples. Arts educators routinely struggle to evaluate areas such as personal expression, creativity, and the evolution of ideas and concepts expressed in students’ works of art. Arts educators continue to need professional development in order to learn how to create assessments, implement assessments, and use assessment results appropriately in their programs (Sabol 2009). The arts education field has readily embraced assessment, but it constitutes troublesome terrain that arts educators are still working to traverse.

Teacher Evaluation

The educational reform movement of the 1980s and 1990s that precipitated the creation of broad-based curricular standards and assessments produced an additional wave of reform that focused on educators, their preparation, and their continued demonstration of competency and professional development. A current national focus on teacher evaluations has captivated decision-makers and policymakers as they move to understand how teachers’ performances in the classroom influence students’ achievement levels. An increasing number of states are creating teacher evaluation systems and models to measure teacher performances. Some are recommending uniform assessments of all educators, while others suggest that numerous models are necessary in order to accommodate the varying conditions and needs that discipline-specific teaching entails. Although teacher evaluation systems may produce positive impacts in our schools, by the same token they may produce unintended consequences that have a negative impact on the quality and accessibility of arts education.

Charter Schools

Because of the public’s perceived failure of the public school system, a number of states have encouraged the creation of alternatives to the traditional public school system. These alternative schools are commonly called charter schools. Some of these schools operate independently as businesses, while others are established with a specific charter or mission that focuses the core of studies on a selected discipline or cluster of disciplines. Controversy increasingly surrounds these schools, because they are frequently exempted from meeting the same performance criteria as the traditional public school system. Charter schools can selectively admit students and limit enrollment. They can also charge tuition that effectively prevents certain students and families from enrolling. Some states have approved voucher systems in which families are given tax dollar vouchers that can be used to pay students’ tuition to attend these schools. Unfortunately, tax dollars used for vouchers are siphoned from public school

funds, forcing public schools to reduce services and faculty needed to meet the needs of those students attending public schools. As with other educational experiments, measurements of charter school students' academic performances are inconclusive. Various studies have suggested that charter schools, as a whole, have produced similar assessment results as public schools (*Education Week* 2012a; *Education Week* 2012b; Zubrzycki 2012). Without question, some charter schools have significantly outperformed public schools, but it is equally true that some have performed at significantly lower levels than public schools. More research and study of the various charter school models is needed before any conclusive judgment about the effectiveness of the charter school model can be made.

The Economic Crisis and Education

Over the past four years, the United States has experienced an economic collapse that many have compared to the Great Depression of the 1930s. The economic crisis has manifested itself in numerous ways in public education, with the most prominent effect being less funding for schools generally. Local school districts have been forced to make critical decisions about the allocation of shrinking budgets. It is too early to evaluate the long-term educational impact and effects these cuts may have on the education of America's youth.

When combined with the mandates of No Child Left Behind, economic conditions have led to increasingly limited funding for purchasing educational materials and equipment for visual arts education programs (Sabol 2010). Funding limitations have also led to cutbacks in visual arts education programming and services (Sabol 2010). Because of widespread faculty and staff reductions, visual arts education class sizes have grown (Mali 2012; Sabol 2010). A report issued by the president's Council of Economic Advisors, the Domestic Policy Council, and the National Economic Council reports that 300,000 teacher job losses have occurred since 2009 (Mali 2012). Sabol (2010) reports that 25 percent of visual arts programs experienced reductions in teaching staff in 2009 alone, with another 20 percent reporting the need for additional teaching staff to handle teaching loads. The impact of faculty reductions on student academic achievement is unknown at this point and should be carefully studied by policymakers and decision-makers at all levels.

Digital Technology

Civilization has been changed permanently because of the advancements that have been made in digital technology. Technological advances have impacted nearly every aspect of human life. Technology is a critical tool in the medical, business, legal, political, agricultural, and educational fields. Cellular phones, laptop computers, smart tablets, the Internet, wireless connectivity, social networks, and countless other manifestations of the pervasive presence of technology exist in our daily lives.

Digital technology is being used in our schools to foster creative expression, teacher–parent communication, distance education/online learning, student and teacher research, student teacher training, social networking, and interactive instruction. Such technology is also being used to facilitate the development of curricula and instructional methods, assessment, and classroom management tasks such as ordering supplies, filing school paperwork, and submitting attendance reports, supply orders, state reports, and so on.

Technology and education have become permanently intertwined. All disciplines use technology to create curricula, deliver instruction, and assess student achievement. Unfortunately, the problem of ensuring equal access to technology continues to plague school systems. Updating equipment and software has become a critical task for all schools and education programs within them. Advances in smartboard, smartphone, and smartpad technology have provided a number of advantages for learning, but the *absence* of such technology has also inhibited the growth of some programs. Some arts education programs continue to struggle to provide their programs with the technology needed for curriculum development, instruction, assessment, and creative studio work.

AN OVERVIEW OF SOME RECENT STUDIES AND THEIR ROLE IN SEISMIC SHIFTING

During the past decade, a number of consequential studies and reports have informed general education broadly and the field of arts education in particular. These documents have helped shape thinking and provide evidence about the current state of arts education and the factors that influence or control the field's evolution and its relationship to general education. The following section offers abbreviated summaries of selected studies and reports that significantly relate to arts education and to shaping the future course of arts education in U.S. schools.

The Publication of Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools: 1999–2000 and 2009–10

During the spring of 2012, the U.S. Department of Education and the National Center for Educational Statistics published *Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools: 1999–2000 and 2009–10* (Parsad and Spiegelman 2012) to provide information about the current status of elementary and secondary art education in the United States. Previous studies were conducted in 1994–95 and in 1999–2000. Data for this study were collected from administrators and visual arts education specialists during the 2009–10 academic year using the Fast Response Survey System (FRSS).

The study produced a number of troubling findings that identified downward shifts in access to arts education programs over the past decade. At the elementary level, for

example, 87 percent of school districts reported providing access to instruction in the visual arts in the 1999–2000 academic year. In 2009–10, the percentage of schools reporting access decreased to 83 percent. In 84 percent of the elementary schools that provided art education, art specialists were employed to provide instruction. Of those programs, 85 percent provided instruction at least once a week and 83 percent of their school districts had a district curriculum guide that art teachers were expected to follow. Full-time visual arts specialists spent an average of twenty-two hours a week teaching twenty-four different classes with about twenty-two students per class, while 43 percent of those art teachers taught at more than one school.

During the same year, 83 percent of elementary schools with concentrated poverty provided yearlong instruction in visual arts, compared with 92 percent of schools classified as having the lowest poverty concentrations. Dedicated rooms with special equipment were used in 59 percent of schools with the highest poverty concentrations compared with 76 percent of schools with the lowest poverty concentrations.

Formal assessment of student learning at the elementary level was conducted through observation (98% of schools), performance tasks (92%), portfolios (55%), developed rubrics (55%), short written answers or essays (22%), and selected response items (19%).

Overall, 59 percent of elementary school districts reported providing professional development in the visual arts. The percentage of visual arts specialists who participated in professional development that connected the visual arts with other subjects was lower in 2009–10 (69%) than in 1999–2000 (79%). In 2009–10, only 56 percent of arts educators participated in professional development that aimed to increase their knowledge about visual arts, compared to 73 percent of educators in 1999–2000.

Similar findings were produced at the secondary level. In 1999–2000, 93 percent of secondary schools provided visual arts instruction. In 2008–09, access to art instruction decreased to 89 percent. In these programs, 86 percent of art teachers taught full time, 8 percent taught part time, and 6 percent of the courses were taught by “other” instructors. Eighty-three percent of school districts had a district curriculum guide that art teachers were expected to follow. Only 40 percent of the programs reported offering more than five courses. Among school districts, 92 percent reported having dedicated rooms for art instruction with special equipment. Regarding teaching loads, 12 percent of instructors taught at more than one school, and 29 percent taught on a block schedule. Secondary art teachers spent an average of twenty-three hours a week teaching seven different classes per week with about twenty-two students per class.

The percentage of secondary schools offering five or more visual arts courses varied by poverty concentration. Twenty-two percent of schools with the highest poverty concentrations offered five or more courses in the visual arts, compared

with 36 to 56 percent of schools with the lowest poverty concentrations. Dedicated rooms with specialized equipment were reported for 85 percent of schools with the highest poverty concentrations, compared to 95 and 97 percent of schools with the lowest poverty concentrations.

Formal assessment of student learning at the secondary level was conducted through performance tasks or projects (98% of schools), observation (96%), developed rubrics (85%), portfolios (76%), and assessments requiring short answers or essays (54%).

In 2009–10, 64 percent of secondary schools reported providing any professional development programming for visual arts teachers. Of visual arts specialists who participated in professional development activities, 60 percent attended programs about integrating educational technologies into visual arts instruction, 57 percent attended programs about connecting visual arts learning with other subject areas, 51 percent attended programs about developing knowledge about the visual arts, and 50 percent attended programs on applied study in art studio production.

This report offers little interpretation of its findings. In fact, interpretation was not an objective of the authors; rather, they intended to provide a descriptive snapshot of a number of characteristics of arts education programs for the 2009–10 academic year. The report does include comparisons with findings for selected characteristics from the 1999–2000 academic year. These comparisons suggest a number of possible trends; however, no substantial conclusions can be reached about their causes or the factors that contributed to. In fact, on the surface it might appear that visual arts education has not significantly changed in the decade since the previous report was published. However, in aggregate, these findings suggest that the status of visual arts education has eroded in a number of meaningful ways.

Few instances can be found in the report to suggest that access to and the status of visual arts education have improved in ten years. No evidence is provided about the impact that No Child Left Behind may have had in accelerating or contributing to the erosion of access to and the status of visual arts education programming reported in this study. It is important to note that the data collection period (2009–10) occurred prior to the time when the full impact of the current economic downturn was felt in our schools. It is likely that visual arts education has been more dramatically impacted than the findings in this report suggest.

It is important that visual arts educators understand the findings reported in this study. These findings suggest that visual arts education *is* valued in U.S. schools, that visual arts educators are engaged in assessing student learning, and that these educators have professional development needs that must be addressed. The report also lists issues that should be added to advocacy agendas across the country in order to address the needs of students in our schools and art programs.

The Publication of *Improving the Assessment of Student Learning in the Arts: State of the Field and Recommendation*

As focus on assessment and accountability significantly increased over the past two and a half decades, the need for a study designed to capture the current state of assessment in arts learning became clear. The National Endowment for the Arts and WestEd conducted such a study to determine current trends, promising techniques, and successful practices being used throughout the country to assess student learning (Herpin, Washington, and Li 2012). Additionally, the study aimed to identify potential areas in which arts assessment could be improved.

Critical findings spanned a range of questions. First, the authors found a lack of high-quality assessment tools, informational documents, assessment guides, and technical reports related to K–12 student learning in the arts. Second, the study suggests that there is a lack of clarity regarding the difference between arts knowledge and arts skills. Survey respondents reported using a variety of assessment tools to collect data about students' learning, including rubrics, observations, portfolios, and performance-based tests. Respondents reported using collected data for formative feedback, program evaluation, and to meet district or school accountability standards. Third, the study suggests a need for a single comprehensive clearinghouse for tools, information, and resources focused on assessing student knowledge and skills in the arts. Such exemplar tools and models of successful assessment practices would significantly aid arts educators in learning about assessment. Similarly, a significant need for professional development related to arts assessment exists. Art educators are eager to assess students' learning; however, the field needs guidance and assistance in implementing high-quality assessment practices. Finally, the authors report that less than one-quarter of respondents received undergraduate- or graduate-level training in assessing students' learning.

National Assessment of Educational Progress, Arts 2008

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) informs the public about the academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in the United States. The NAEP collects and reports information on student performances at the national, state, and local levels, making the assessment an integral part of national evaluation of the condition and progress of education.

The 2008 NAEP in the arts included assessments of eighth grade students' visual arts and music creating and responding abilities (Keiper et al. 2009). Assessments were conducted using both multiple choice and constructed-response items. Students were asked to analyze and describe works of art, as well as to create their own works of art. In general, students who performed well on questions that involved responding

to visual art also performed well on questions about creating visual art. The average responding score (on a scale of 0 to 300) was 150, with a range of 104 to 193. The average creating score (on a scale of 0 to 100) was 52, with a range of 40 to 62. Female students outperformed male students in both the creating and responding portions of the assessment. Average responding scores for white and Asian/Pacific Islander students were higher than those for black and Hispanic students. Responding scores for students from private schools (159) were higher than those for students from public schools (149). Students from suburban schools had the highest responding scores, with an average of 155 points, followed by students from rural schools (151), students from town schools (149), and students from city schools (144). Creating scores for students from private schools (60) were higher than those for students from public schools (51). Students from suburban schools had the highest creating scores, with an average of 54 points, followed by students from rural schools (52), students from town schools (50), and students from city schools (49). Although the previous NAEP assessment in the arts was conducted in 1997, comparisons between the two sets of results could not be made, because some of the scoring procedures could not be replicated.

Publication of the *Metlife Survey of the American Teacher*

It goes without saying that U.S. educational systems are experiencing an unprecedented time of challenge and change. A variety of national education issues are being discussed and debated in both print and electronic media and among legislators, school board members, parents, educators, and other stakeholders. Recently, MetLife (2012) released a report of findings from a study it had conducted entitled *The Metlife Survey of the American Teacher: Teachers, Parents, and the Economy*. The study, the twenty-eighth in a series sponsored annually by MetLife since 1984, surveyed 1,001 K–12 public school teachers, 1,086 adults, and 947 public school students in grades 3 through 12 to examine the teaching profession and parent–school involvement during a prolonged economic downturn. The study attempted to identify how teachers and parents are working together to provide quality student learning and healthy development with reduced budgets, reallocation of resources, and continued pressures to demonstrate improvement in teaching and learning. These critical issues are only a few among many that face our schools today.

Three principal findings were reported. The first is that the effects of the economic downturn are being felt widely and deeply in education. More than three-quarters (76%) of teachers reported budget cuts in their schools; these cuts were experienced across the full range of school types, including urban, rural, and suburban. Two-thirds (66%) of teachers reported that their school had laid off teachers and staff as a result of budget cuts. In schools where teacher reductions occurred, programs or services were frequently reduced or

eliminated. Overall, more than one-third (36%) of teachers reported reductions or eliminations of programs in art or music (28%), foreign language (17%), or physical education (12%) and similar cuts in afterschool programs (34%) in the last year. Teachers in schools with more than two-thirds minority students were more likely than other teachers to report reductions or eliminations of arts or music programs at their schools. Additionally, nearly two-thirds (63%) of teachers reported that the average class size had increased in their schools, and over one-third (34%) reported that technology had not been kept up-to-date to meet student standards. In schools where budget cuts were experienced, parents and teachers reported being more pessimistic that the level of student achievement would improve than did parents in those schools where budgets either remained the same or increased.

The second principal finding was that parent engagement has increased over the past twenty-five years but remains a challenge for many schools. The study reported that educators are continuously seeking ways to engage parents in their children's education and that most teachers, parents, and students believe that schools are engaging parents in supporting student success. There was a dramatic increase in the number of students (16% in 1988 to 46% in 2012) who reported that their parents visited school at least once a month, and two-thirds of students reported talking every day with their parents about things that happened in school. Parents also reported that schools with higher parent engagement perform better on a range of measures. Another key finding revealed that more parent engagement is directly associated with higher teacher job satisfaction; increased optimism among teachers, parents, and students about student achievement; and more positive relations between parents and teachers.

Finally, the study reported that teachers are less satisfied with their careers and that in the past two years there has been a significant decline in teachers' satisfaction with their profession. The study reported that the percentage of teachers who say they are "very likely" or "fairly likely" to leave the teaching profession for another occupation, feel their job is not secure, increased from 17% in 2009, when the MetLife survey began measuring job satisfaction, to 29% in 2011. Salaries, class sizes, and workloads were the most commonly cited reasons for teacher departures. Slightly more than half (53%) of parents and two-thirds (65%) of teachers said that public school teachers' salaries are not fair, considering the work they do. In schools with teachers who report high job satisfaction, teachers are more likely to have adequate opportunities for professional development and time to collaborate with other teachers, receive more support to engage parents effectively, and experience greater involvement of parents in coming together to improve student learning and success.

A number of findings from this study are troubling to all educators. Each of us is being asked to do more with less and challenged to be more creative and innovative in our approaches to maintaining quality education. Many of the factors contributing to this current situation are beyond the

control of any individual teacher or group of teachers. Certainly, establishing strong partnerships with parents and others in the public can help to diminish the impact of economic problems on our arts education programs. In light of these troubling issues facing our schools, we must be ever mindful of the purposes for which schools exist and the reasons for which we entered the teaching profession. Educators must be committed to providing the finest quality of art education possible to each student in their classrooms, schools, and communities. In the final analysis, education must always be about providing knowledge and skills to all children in order to allow them to pursue the futures they create for themselves and our country. Without question, a quality arts education is central to this vision.

Twenty-First-Century Skills

Growing concern about the competitiveness of the United States in the global market led to the formation of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. This consortium of business and technology leaders produced a list of thirteen skills that they identified as essential for Americans to maintain their leadership and remain competitive in the world economy. These same skills were also deemed essential skills for students to develop in order to advance their learning in core academic disciplines. They include critical thinking; communication; collaboration; creativity; innovation; information literacy; media literacy; information, communication, and technology literacy; flexibility and adaptability; innovation and self-direction; social and cross-cultural skills; productivity and accountability; and leadership and responsibility.

The program of twenty-first-century skills has been widely embraced throughout the country as a means for improving learning in all disciplines. To illustrate these skills, Dean et al. (2010) created a twenty-first-century skills arts map, which includes examples of how each of the skills might appear in dance, music, theater, and visual arts programs at the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade levels. It also includes examples of interdisciplinary themes for learning that include global awareness; financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy; health literacy; and environmental literacy. Quality arts education programming is generally suited to foster each of these skills and address interdisciplinary learning themes.

Common Core Standards

Following the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983) and *Toward Civilization* (National Endowment for the Arts 1988), a wave of national educational reform began that continues to this day. One of the enduring artifacts of this reform movement can be found in curriculum standards in all disciplines. Educators in the 1980s and 1990s were faced with the task of identifying the essential knowledge and skills that should be included in each discipline's curricular content. Many states launched

standards creation initiatives that resulted in the production of idiosyncratic sets of standards across the country. As a result, the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers created the Common Core Standards for Language Arts and Math. Most states in the country adopted these standards in an effort to provide uniform curricular content in all classrooms for these disciplines. These states are now requiring that the Common Core Standards be addressed in arts education programs. At this point, the impact that the inclusion of these standards will have on arts education programming and instruction in the visual arts is unclear.

New National Arts Standards

Since their publication in 1994, the National Standards for the Arts have provided a broad framework for the development of arts curricula (Consortium for National Arts Education Associations 1994). In the years following their publication, state departments of education published their own unique, individualized versions of these standards, which took into account state and local educational needs in the arts. Variation among these state standards abounded (Sabol 1994), but for the most part, they reflected the discipline-based art education model for learning in the visual arts. Over the past two and a half decades, the general field of education has made significant strides in expanding the range of content such standards address. Standard thinking about the purposes and goals of arts education has gone through similar changes, rendering the current standards less reflective of the current need for comprehensive education in the arts. As a result, new standards are being written for dance, music, theater, visual arts, and media arts. These new standards will be based on more current thinking and a theoretical model that will significantly expand the understanding of the contemporary goals and purposes of an education in each of these art forms. Publication of the new standards in the next year and a half is likely to transform arts education and trigger another seismic wave of reform in arts education in all schools and communities across the country.

No Child Left Behind

The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), more commonly known as No Child Left Behind, sent shockwaves across the educational landscape. ESEA was originally part of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society reform agenda and was intended to fund schools that were located in deprived areas that lacked adequate state funding to improve the quality of education they offered. The current version of the law, NCLB, triggered sweeping changes in all disciplines of public education. NCLB is so complex that knowledgeable people often disagree about what it specifies and what it means for our schools. However, it is clear that since its reauthorization, NCLB has caused educators, decision-makers, and the

public to rethink the purposes, goals, and practices of our educational systems. Consistent with the aims of the 1965 ESEA, the intent of NCLB is to assist students who are disadvantaged and who attend schools in disadvantaged settings. NCLB aimed to close the achievement gap and bring all students up to proficiency in math and English by 2014. However, in reality, NCLB has had an impact on all schools and communities in all disciplines and at all instructional levels.

NCLB is based on four basic principles: stronger accountability, as measured through test results; increased flexibility and local control; expanded options for parents; and an emphasis on methods that have already been proven to work. The legislation has introduced a number of terms and practices previously unknown in U.S. education. Terms such as "best practices," "AYP," "schools in need of improvement" (INI), "schools in need of corrective action" (UCA), "charter schools," and others have become part of popular educational jargon. Sabol (2006) reports that arts educators identify the need for receiving information and training about NCLB as one of their principal professional development needs. It is uncertain what revisions Congress will make when it reauthorizes NCLB, but the lessons learned since 2001 will be critical in influencing the new provisions of the law.

The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth

In a recent study funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, Catterall, Dumais, and Hampden-Thompson (2012) examined the effects that arts education programming—either within or outside the school curriculum—has on at-risk youth participation in academic and civic behaviors. Three principal findings were produced: socially and economically disadvantaged youth who have high levels of arts engagement or arts learning show more positive outcomes in a variety of areas than their peers with low levels of arts engagement; at-risk youth with a history of intensive arts experiences show achievement levels closer to, and in some cases exceeding, the levels shown by the general population; and most of the positive relationships between arts involvement and academic outcomes apply only to at-risk populations, but positive relationships between arts and civic engagement are noted in groups not defined as at-risk as well.

Broadly speaking, this study suggests that arts involvement is indeed associated with better academic and civic outcomes. Although the researchers provide a cautionary note that states that causal inferences cannot be drawn, they also find a positive relationship between at-risk students who are engaged in arts education programming and more positive academic and civic outcomes. At-risk students engaged in arts education programming had higher science and writing test scores, higher GPAs, and higher aspirations to attend college than did students who were not involved in arts education programming. These same students also produced higher college graduation rates and higher GPAs in college

than did students not engaged in arts education courses and programs.

Students who had intensive arts experiences demonstrated higher levels of civic engagement than their non-arts-engaged peers. For example, at-risk youth with arts experiences were more likely to take an interest in current affairs, as evidenced by higher levels of volunteering, voting, involvement in political campaigning, and engagement in local or school politics and government and school service clubs.

President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, *Reinvesting in Arts Education* (2011)

As stated in NCLB, the arts are defined as a core learning subject in a balanced education. It is understood that an education in the arts contributes to learning in other disciplines and affects performance in standardized assessments of learning (Fiske 1999; Sabol 1998; Sabol and Zimmerman 1997). A report published by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) in 2011 suggests that the arts and arts education play significant and essential roles in the nation's economy. The PCAH details a number of studies that illustrate this point and offers a number of suggestions for enhancing quality arts education in the country. Among these suggestions is the recommendation that teaching artists be incorporated into arts classrooms as a supplemental contribution to the arts education being provided by certified arts educators. The role that teaching artists can play in supporting the educational needs of all learners in the arts has been demonstrated for many decades, and these individuals are widely used to expand arts educational programming in schools and communities across the country. The caveat must be raised that teaching artists must not replace certified arts educators in school programs. In reality, however, this outcome has occurred in a number of schools and communities as a result of budget cuts and staff reductions. It is vitally important for policymakers and decision-makers to recognize the limitations of such models and to actively create and implement arts education policies that include the supplemental educational contributions that teaching artists make to any arts education program without compromising the contributions of certified education specialists.

A DISCUSSION OF SOME POLICY ISSUES FOR ARTS EDUCATION

Given the number of issues and reports that have influenced the educational landscape in recent years, it is difficult to tie these distinctive factors together to fully understand the roles they play both separately and collectively in shaping the future for general education and for arts education more specifically. The following discussion is intended to identify a number of areas in which these developments should be

considered and acted upon by policymakers, decision-makers, school leaders, and arts educators.

Preservice Teacher Preparation

Policies related to the training of preservice arts educators must reflect the ongoing changes that are occurring in the field of general education. Preservice programs are obligated to keep pace with these changes in order to adequately prepare the next generation of arts educators. Preservice education policy must be equally responsive to ensure that preservice programs are capable of implementing necessary changes accordingly. Enrollments in preservice programs are likely to experience growth in the next few years as the number of students in public schools increases and the number of teachers decreases as a result of continuing retirement of the baby boomer generation.

Preservice programs and policies will need to explore alternative programming and certification options that enable pools of individuals from fine arts backgrounds to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills needed to become effective professional arts educators. A growing number of colleges and universities are adopting five-year programs or providing supplemental alternative certification programs through which fine arts majors can complete pedagogical coursework following in-depth studio experience.

Faculty in preservice programs need professional development opportunities that will enable them to keep abreast of the current developments in and evolution of the field of education generally and arts education specifically. Preservice programs need policies that encourage faculty to engage in professional development and revision or development of preservice programming. Such policies should also recognize the initiative of faculty who conduct pre-K–12 research that practitioners and school leaders can use to inform their practice. Merit raise, promotion, and tenure policies should include provisions that reward faculty who focus their efforts in these areas.

It is essential that policies that maintain studio-rich content in preservice programs be developed and implemented. Some programs do not have the capability to offer the wide array of studio courses needed by arts education students to acquire the breadth of studio knowledge and skills required to teach in the classroom. Policies that support the creation and expansion of a broad array of studio offerings are vital for increasing the knowledge and skills base of preservice arts educators at all instructional levels.

Teacher Evaluations

Teacher evaluations will continue to grow in importance in the field of education. In the broadest sense, they will positively impact the field by improving the quality of teaching, thereby improving the quality of student learning and achievement in our schools. Among the many factors that should be considered and included in crafting teacher evalu-

ations, the following considerations for the evaluation of arts educators should be addressed:

1. Protocols for teacher evaluation adopted at the state and local levels must be aligned with those areas that the specific educator is responsible for teaching. Measures of achievement in mathematics and/or language arts and reading are invalid measures for evaluating teachers who are responsible for teaching other core subject areas.
2. Arts educators welcome accountability and measures of their effectiveness. To support these efforts, the National Art Education Association developed the *Professional Standards for Visual Arts Educators* (2009). Each of these standards includes benchmarks that identify the knowledge and skills all visual arts educators should possess and demonstrate in order to provide high-quality instruction in the visual arts to every student. Arts teacher evaluation systems should reflect these standards and provide multiple measures that produce a comprehensive profile of each individual teacher's performance.
3. Arts teacher evaluation systems should include multiple measures that are effective in different teaching settings and at different instructional levels. These systems must be capable of assessing the various kinds of learning that occur in arts classrooms and should be based on sound assessment theory and accepted assessment practice. For visual arts teachers, the need for access to and contact time with students is significantly different from that needed by generalist classroom teachers. For example, at the elementary level, visual arts educators usually teach multiple grade levels and frequently teach in multiple schools. Some elementary arts educators see as many as 300 to 500 students in a school for thirty minutes per week, while others may see 150 students for sixty minutes each week. Still others may see daily a small segment of the school population who has selected visual arts education on an elective basis. Teacher evaluation systems based on student achievement need to reflect these variables and the realities of teaching the visual arts.
4. There is merit in considering teacher evaluation measures that apply an aggregate, whole-school approach, whereby the teaching performance for the entire school is evaluated collectively and all school personnel are held accountable for the academic performances of all students in the school.
5. Strategies that evaluate all teachers based only on student achievement in math and language arts have the unintended consequence of narrowing the curriculum and reducing the opportunities for all students to acquire critical skills in innovation, creativity, critical thinking and problem solving, and collaboration. It is increasingly recognized that the development of these

skills is essential for all students as part of a high-quality, twenty-first-century education that will allow them to successfully compete in a global economy.

6. National, state, and local standards and curricula must be at the core of accountability systems. Support for instruction, such as access to the curriculum, increased instructional time, and availability of instructional resources, must be provided to teachers to enable them in helping their students attain the desired levels of learning and achievement in the arts.

Curriculum

Upheavals in curriculum in recent decades have been substantial. A number of curricular issues have been identified and attempts have been made to resolve those issues through curricular revision and expansion. The creation of new national arts curriculum standards will require major revisions in state and local curriculum standards. The field of arts education can therefore be expected to experience levels of change not encountered since the publication of the National Standards in 1994. Arts educators at every instructional level will have to review and restructure their curricula to reflect the nature and content of the new standards. State departments of education will need to review their curriculum policies and take steps to revise their state arts curriculum standards to ensure that they are compatible with the new national standards. Significant resources and expertise in curriculum development will be called upon to complete this task during a time when state budgets are in decline.

State curriculum development policies must be revised to ensure that they include such standards as the twenty-first-century skills and Common Core Language Arts and Mathematics standards, as well as taking into account other concerns regarding visual culture, college and career preparation, and interdisciplinary and integrated learning. A cautionary note should be offered here. Policymakers and decision-makers must ensure that the core of learning in arts classrooms continues to be development in the arts and that this aim not be diluted by the demands of other curricular concerns from outside the field of arts education. Arts education should continue to be about art and should not become the handmaiden of other disciplines.

Instruction

Quality instruction is at the core of all learning in schools. Instructional policies should require that teachers provide instruction that is developmentally appropriate, varied to meet the preferred learning modes of students, and engaging for all students. Educators must learn and master a wide variety of instructional methods and regularly rotate them in delivering instruction. Instruction should include technology as a means of meeting the different educational learning styles of various students. Educators need to include new instructional technology in their classrooms and explore innovative

instructional methods that engage students in acquiring the knowledge and skills of visual arts learning and expression.

Assessment

Assessment is an essential component of all education. Assessment policies for arts education must address a wide range of goals and purposes and must support the use of a broad array of assessment methods and tools. These same policies should support the ongoing professional development of arts educators in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct assessments. It is important for policymakers to address the ethical uses of data in decision-making and evaluating teacher performances. Educational policies should also address the uses of assessment in measuring student achievement, curriculum effectiveness, instructional efficacy, assessment practices and procedures, teacher performances, and program development. Assessment should be used for informing practice and policy and not for punitive purposes. It should become an ally of instruction and learning, not the central purpose and focus of schooling.

Digital Technology

The explosion of digital technology in the contemporary world is unprecedented in human history. Digital technology is omnipresent and has permanently altered every aspect of human life. Educators find themselves in the unenviable position of being required not only to use technology for educational purposes, but also to continue to learn about advances in technology. Policies about the uses and inclusion of digital technology in arts education must be revisited and revised.

New digital technology policies must address the media arts and set forth guidelines for the training and licensure of media arts instructors. Such policies must include provisions for the inclusion of media arts in all arts education curricula. Media arts is a key component of a comprehensive arts education, and curriculum content must not only address media arts as a manipulation of software and hardware systems, but also as a tool that can be utilized for artistic purposes in the creation of products that demonstrate an understanding of the aesthetic qualities found in all works of art.

Professional Development

The current economic climate has forced school leaders to curtail or severely limit support for professional development of all educators. Such restrictions on supporting the professional development of teachers have had the effect of these teachers losing ground in keeping up with the waves of reform and educational upheavals the United States is experiencing. At stake are the diminished capacities of educators and, in turn, their students' academic achievement. In the medical field, it is unthinkable that any physician would not avail him or herself of ongoing professional develop-

ment opportunities in order to keep abreast of advances in medicine. The professional development of educators is of equal importance. The range and number of advancements and shifts that have occurred in the field of education require that educators be given the same consideration for expanding their professional knowledge and skills as are practitioners in any other profession. Education leaders and policymakers must implement policies that support meaningful and timely professional development for all educators.

CONCLUSION

Just as the earth's crust is in a constant state of change and movement, so too is the field of education in a constant state of flux in response to shifting pressures from the public and policymakers and the changing educational needs of our country, our people, and our students.

Some changes in the earth's landscape occur slowly, almost imperceptibly, while others are rapid and produce cataclysmic results. The field of education has experienced both of these kinds of seismic shifts in the past two decades. Some of these shifts have been gradual, while others have been implemented with haste and urgency. To be certain, educational policy has not kept pace with the unprecedented changes that have occurred. Current educational policies need to be re-examined to determine whether they are reflective of these recent shifts. New policies must be created and enacted in order to mark these changing educational needs and developments.

It is of the utmost importance for policymakers and decision-makers to be vigilant in their efforts to monitor the recent volcanic eruption of research and reports about educational developments and issues. The shifting sands upon which educators find themselves continue to make the study of educational policy a principal concern for the field of education generally and for arts education in particular. In order for America to maintain its position of world leadership, it is incumbent upon educational leaders to provide similar leadership in policy study, development, and implementation. It is only through such efforts that the seismic shifts in the educational landscape can be fully understood and can contribute to improving the quality of arts education in our schools and communities.

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