

# Arts Education for All

Lessons from the First Half of the Ford Foundation's  
National Arts Education Initiative

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*As arts educators build strong programs,  
they must also develop related  
political-advocacy, partnership-building,  
and strategic-communication skills.*



# About this Monograph

**I**N 2004, THE FORD FOUNDATION launched the National Arts Education Initiative – a bold and forward-looking effort to address issues of equity and access in arts education. The initiative advances a new and significant framework for achieving the goal of increasing access to quality integrated arts education for *all* children.

In its underlying strategic approach, the Ford initiative charts important new ground. It proposes that as arts educators build strong programs, they must also develop related political-advocacy, partnership-building, and strategic-communication skills. Through this process, they strengthen their capacity to catalyze public demand and policy momentum for the kinds of systemic changes that are *essential* if arts education is to flourish broadly and equitably – across communities and across the nation.

Through the work of the nine grantees that are being supported through the National Arts Education Initiative, and several national partner organizations that are assisting them, important findings are emerging concerning the successes and challenges involved in mobilizing for the type of change and action that is envisioned by the National Arts Education Initiative.

This monograph covers roughly the first half (2004 – 2007) of the Ford Foundation’s National Arts Education Initiative. The initiative is now in its final phases and is scheduled to conclude in 2011. The OMG Center for Collaborative Learning intends to produce a final report for the field thereafter, examining outcomes, successes, and lessons learned across the initiative’s lifespan.

The monograph that follows aims to share more broadly with the field – including arts educators, funders, policymakers, artists, educators, and others – important learning that is emerging from the National Arts Education Initiative. Based on an internal evaluation of the initiative’s first phase, conducted from Spring 2004 through Spring 2008 by the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning, this monograph will likely be of interest to those invested in issues of educational quality, arts learning, equity considerations, and systems change. It includes: a discussion of the philosophical and strategic underpinnings of the initiative; an overview of field trends and contexts; a synthesis of relevant literature from the fields of arts education, political science, and other sectors; a discussion of various successes and challenges faced by initiative participants as they work to strengthen programs and mobilize constituencies; and illuminating case studies that bring to life

efforts of practitioners to reform education within their local communities.

Directly and indirectly, the monograph examines such important questions as: In an initiative of this magnitude and scope, how can consensus be reached among diverse participants as to the identification and benchmarking of progress toward goals? What constitutes “readiness” to take on the challenges of partnership building, advocacy, and strategic communications to advance arts education for all? In the volatile and often politically-charged context of local school systems, how do organizations respond to and ready themselves for inevitable leadership changes? What are the links between data collection, evaluation, and effective advocacy? What innovative strategies are emerging for investing parents in arts education advocacy? What issues and themes are proving to be especially effective and resonant in mobilizing community interest in arts education?

Ford launched the National Arts Education Initiative with the recognition that the long-term building of coordinated arts and education program delivery systems for *all* children requires significantly more public and private resources. Thus, for this initiative, Ford’s primary intention is to demonstrate how communities build local public will for expanded and systemic approaches to arts and education, with a focus on two key areas: *partnership building*, and *strategic communication and advocacy*. For it is only through increased public will and market demand that more public and private resources can flow towards arts education. More dollars will allow successful arts and education pilots to scale up and achieve greater reach. In support of public will-building and advocacy, the initiative also seeks to help locales learn how to prepare and build their arts and education delivery systems for broader impact.

Additionally, Ford anticipates that the initiative can contribute substantially to the national debate about what constitutes quality education. Through this monograph, and other information dissemination strategies, it is hoped that a widening circle of citizens will be galvanized to work systemically for the important goal of quality arts education for all children.

# Introduction: Arts Education for All

## THE CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

**Educating the Whole Child:** In the last decade, as high-stakes testing in math and reading has dominated national educational improvement efforts under the No Child Left Behind act, the Ford Foundation has remained steadfast in its belief that quality education ought to develop the whole child, cultivating knowledge building in a range of disciplines and through multiple learning modalities. Intending to reintroduce education of the whole child into national discussions about quality education, the Ford Foundation in 2004 launched a demonstration project, the Ford Foundation's National Arts Education Initiative. The central aim of the initiative is to increase access to quality integrated arts education for all K-8 students in the U.S.

**From Fragmentation to Coordination:** As many have recently observed,<sup>1</sup> few cities have well-developed and coordinated arts and education delivery systems. Rather, communities more typically are characterized as having arts education programs that are fragmented, uncoordinated pilots, targeted to a subset of schools. The pilots are usually supported by soft dollars and run by an array of private, nonprofit brokers and arts and culture organizations in partnership with public school districts. In its underlying approach, the Ford Foundation's National Arts Education Initiative recognizes that the long-term building of coordinated and equitable arts and delivery systems necessitates more resources, both public and private; these cannot be leveraged in the absence of building public will and policy commitment for expanded and systemic approaches to arts and education.

**Policy and Practice:** The planning phase of the initiative coincided with a period when there had been important progress toward advancing arts education within the public school arena. The enactment in the mid-1990s of Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which asserted the arts as core disciplines, propelled many states to adopt or develop their own arts education standards. With this, the arts were educationally validated

and the bar was raised for quality pedagogy. Although the formulation of arts education standards was celebrated as a policy victory, practice unfortunately had yet to catch up. Adequate arts education financing, teaching infrastructure, and effective and appropriate assessments remained to be developed.

**Emerging Models:** During this same time, there was increased recognition of the functional value of arts partnership programs in developing and delivering high-quality arts instruction. In this widely-heralded partnership model, a lead organization works outside the school district and operates as a bridge and facilitator among the teaching artists, the arts and culture community, and public schools to deliver arts education in multiple disciplines (i.e. visual arts, music, theater, dance, creative writing, and media arts) during in-school time to public school students. Several cities, including Dallas, Chicago, and New York City have benefited from extraordinary arts partnership programs. In these cases, school penetration of arts programming grew significantly. Nonetheless, even in these cities where public school districts were partners, and at times financial partners, the burden of delivery remained on nonprofit and foundation dollars.

**Equity and Access:** No matter what their scale, these arts partnerships did not have the resources to reach all children with quality arts education. In many locales, reliant on soft funding, arts partnerships remained fragile and provided programming to schools in which champions pursued them. Many schools and many children remained untouched, particularly in lower-income communities. Thus, no matter how the arts partnerships grew, they remained demonstration programs.

*It is only through increased public will and market demand that more public and private dollars can flow towards arts education.*

### PLANNING THE INITIATIVE

Arts education as part of quality education for all children was therefore an ultimate goal of the initiative. In Ford's planning, initiative designers realized that creating equity and the scaling up of arts integration demonstrations would require buy-in and collaboration from those working in the arts and education fields as well as others who influence policy-making decisions. Ford, with its long history of philanthropic support for program innovation, recognized that equity and broad access to arts education could not be achieved in the absence of public dollars to support the exemplary practices that foundation dollars demonstrate.

**Partnership and Strategic Communications:** The overall design of the initiative reflects Ford's understanding that arts education policy is the result of decisions made by local school district leaders, as well as multiple interest groups working through an aligned coalition to inform and at times pressure these decision-makers. To advance local arts education policies, therefore, grantees would need to be able to sway local education policy influentials, or "grass tops," and also marshal more "grassroots" coalitions, comprised of a variety of stakeholders interested in youth and education issues.

For the National Arts Education Initiative, Ford anticipated that a partnership of arts and education champions representing arts and culture organizations, school districts, community and youth organizations, as well as parents, would be the lead drivers of local arts and education reform. On the local and national levels, the initiative supports targeted and well-developed strategic communication efforts – for example, conducting audience research, identifying core messages to influence various targeted audiences, and developing and implementing effective communications campaigns – as central elements in buttressing and advancing these initiative advocacy goals.

**A Focus on Integrated Arts:** While firmly committed to the value of the arts as discrete disciplines ("learning in the arts"), Ford's strategic emphasis for this initiative has been on the arts as effective tools ("learning through the arts"). Ford's interest in integrated arts education follows an emerging body of literature that points to the arts as effective tools for student learning.<sup>2</sup> Ford's commitment to arts education is also grounded in the foundation's belief, supported by research, that arts in education can affirm multicultural identity, motivate and engage students in learning by providing varied entry points to learn other subjects,<sup>3</sup> and lead to improved student outcomes in other disciplines.

The initiative's integrated arts emphasis is also rooted in the reality that within most urban school days there are many competing subjects and demands; adding yet another could be too logistically challenging for schools. Further, many urban schools have no arts at all, therefore, integration was deemed more practical as an introductory approach.



1 See, for example: the Rand Corporation's report, *Revitalizing Arts through Community Wide Collaboration*, April, 2008.

2 See for example: James Catterall, "Involvement in the Arts and Success in Secondary School," *Americans for the Arts Monographs*, 1998, 1(9), Washington, DC; Palmer Wolf, "Why the Arts Matter in Education Or Just What Do Children Learn When They Create an Opera?" *Champions of Change, The Arts Education Partnership and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities*, Washington, DC 1999.

3 See, for example: Howard Gardner. *Frames of Mind: A Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Basic Books, New York. 1989.

# Initiative Overview: Structure and Participants

To carry forth its ambitious agenda, the Ford Foundation created a multi-dimensional, long-term initiative, bringing together diverse grantees with varying approaches to and experiences with arts education programming, partnership building, and advocacy efforts. Key design elements of the initiative are highlighted below:

## INITIATIVE DESIGN AND STRUCTURE

- Multi-year financial support to nine grantees, representing diversity of geographic locale, expertise and history of developing arts and education programming, organizational structure, and other factors. The nine grantees are: **Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership** (housed with the Alameda County Office of Education), Alameda County, CA; **Arts Every Day**, Baltimore, MD; **Arts Education Initiative** (housed within the University of California–UC Berkeley Graduate School of Education), Berkeley, CA; **Art is Education** (led by Young Audiences of Northeast Cleveland), Cleveland, OH; **Big Thought**, Dallas, TX; **Ask for More Arts** (housed within Parents for Public Schools), Jackson, MS; **Interchange** (housed within the Center of Creative Arts), St. Louis, MO; and **DC Arts and Humanities Collaborative**, Washington, DC. In 2007, **Arts for Academic Achievement** (housed within the Minneapolis Public Schools), Minneapolis, MN was added.
- Participation of three organizational collaborators with expertise in arts education technical assistance, strategic communications, and evaluation and partnership building. These organizational participants include the Arts Education Partnership, Douglas Gould and Company, and the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning.
- Bi-yearly convenings of grantees to foster communication, build networks, share emerging best practices, and provide a coordinated mechanism for the delivery of technical assistance.
- Individually-focused technical assistance to the grantees provided by the Arts Education Partnership, Doug Gould and Company, and a team of other specified consultants.

## THE GRANTEES

Appropriately for a pilot strategy, the Ford Foundation selected a diverse set of grantees to lead the work of demonstrating how different types of organizations take on arts education systems-building and policy-change work. The sites vary geographically, in arts and education reform know-how, organizational capacity, and experience in leading arts and education advocacy and systems-building work. They range from organizations with multi-million dollar budgets that have been involved with arts-related systems change work for over a decade to start-up organizations with limited arts education programming experience. This diversity has led to fruitful dialogue among initiative participants and yielded important lessons about different ways organizations and leaders mobilize for change in light of local contexts. A summary of each grantee's core programs and capacities can be found at the end of this section.

For the purpose of the analysis that follows, the sites may be broadly categorized as:

- “advanced” – already engaged in the type of partnership building and strategic communications championed by the initiative (for example, Dallas, Alameda, and Minneapolis);
- “developing” – possessing arts education program experience, but more limited partnership and policy-influencing experience (for example, Cleveland);
- “emerging” – exhibiting exemplary work in discrete areas, but facing knowledge and experience gaps in the arts and education field (for example, Jackson, St. Louis, Washington, and Berkeley); and
- “start up” – newly engaged with arts education issues and programs (for example, Baltimore).

Not surprisingly, and as will be further discussed in the pages that follow, based on their prior history of developing and implementing arts education programs, grantees evidenced varying levels of readiness in terms of understanding the core goals of the initiative, developing targeted strategies to achieve those goals, and engaging in necessary capacity building. However, all have come to embrace the conviction that more systemic and equitable approaches to arts education will require significant shifts in public education policies, and the coordination of arts education programming and advocacy agendas across an array of public and private providers and funders.

### THE ROLE OF THE FORD FOUNDATION

To date, the Ford Foundation has played a pivotal role in this initiative, not just as a funder, but also as an advocate for arts education, particularly with those audiences not historically engaged in arts education, including education philanthropists and parent advocates for education reform. The Foundation also played a key role as technical assistance provider to the sites, working with local funders and policymakers to build support for the grantee work.

During start-up, the Ford Foundation provided planning funds to organizations to develop their ideas and their strategies for this work. Also during this time, the foundation began connecting grantees to one another to begin building a national peer-to-peer learning network. The foundation made suggestions to grantees to visit other more advanced programs across the country and it also convened grantees to meet in New York City to share early progress and reflect on an initiative-wide Theory of Change (described in the next section of this document).

In this first implementation phase, Ford support (yearly allocations of \$125,000–\$150,000 per grantee, which later rose to \$175,000–\$200,000) allowed grantees to hire dedicated staff to lead this work, begin to convene partners, make the case for arts learning with key policymakers, leverage local funding opportunities, and build local coalitions. In some locales where

no prior integrated arts programs existed, Ford dollars were also used to contribute to start-up programs. Given the scale of Ford resources and the primacy of the advocacy intention, these new programs quickly required greater local investments. Foundation staff played an important role with the philanthropic community as an advocate and a convener of grantmakers in education and in the arts to discuss and advance opportunities for joint arts and education funding strategies.

### PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Three national organizations help guide the initiative, provide crucial planning and implementation assistance to grantees, and form a leadership team – working in collaboration with the foundation and grantees to advance initiative goals:

**Technical Assistance:** The Arts Education Partnership (AEP) – a national coalition of arts, education, business, philanthropic, and government organizations – functions as the technical assistance provider to the Ford sites. As the technical assistance providers, the AEP team is charged with providing individualized technical assistance to the sites and with creating networking and learning opportunities for the nine grantees as a whole.

For the individualized grantee technical assistance, AEP provides peer-to-peer assistance; external

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assistance from arts education specialists to grantees; arts education knowledge-building at national Arts Education Partnership meetings, as well as twice-yearly, initiative-wide meetings; and direct, specific AEP staff assistance as needed. AEP also provides grantees with funding to support targeted travel to meetings that strengthen grantee capacity to address initiative goals.

**Strategic Communications:** From the outset of the initiative, the Ford Foundation engaged Douglas Gould and Company (DGC), a communications firm located in the New York City region, to provide national and site-specific communications support for the initiative. The five-member DGC team has worked on a variety of communications and research activities to identify key messages to frame the initiative for advocacy work. Early on, DGC conducted national research including public opinion polls about arts education. Using the research findings, DGC created a series of messaging platforms for arts education, which linked problem identification with suggested action steps, and included targeted approaches that would be especially resonant with specific stakeholders. (See Appendix B for more details.)

DGC has led site-based and on-line workshops to help grantees develop advocacy and communications strategies to mobilize arts active parents and other arts advocates. These workshops build off web-based tools and training guides, including media toolkits, letter templates that constituencies can personalize to lobby local decision-makers, campaign strategy hints, and other resources to encourage action by targeted arts advocates. Also, DGC has created a website ([www.KeepArtsInTheSchools.org](http://www.KeepArtsInTheSchools.org)), an information portal that supports the work of the nine Ford grantees and also provides interactive content for a national audience about how to engage in arts education advocacy.

**Evaluation:** As initiative evaluator, the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning has placed emphasis on formative progress during the initiative's first phase – developing a capacity framework for the initiative (see next section), and developing initiative-wide and site-specific benchmarks to assess progress towards goals and guide grantee activity. In addition, OMG is collecting quantitative and qualitative data to track outcomes over the short- and long-term.

**Reflective Practice in Action:** As the “Ford Arts Ed Team,” the Ford Foundation, the Arts Education Partnership, Douglas Gould and Company, and OMG engage in ongoing communication, regular conference calls, and annual meetings to guide initiative work. The support team has also participated in joint site visits to insure that the sites had clarity about the respective roles of team members, and to present the work of the initiative in a unified way. In turn, the team visits also helped with building a shared understanding of site issues related to capacity, leadership, and local contexts. The Ford team has used the initiative-wide Theory of Change to frame the larger goals of the initiative and the site-specific action steps necessary to achieve them.



## NATIONAL ARTS EDUCATION INITIATIVE GRANTEES<sup>1</sup>

**Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership**, housed within the Alameda County Office of Education (Alameda County, CA) – Decade-old, county-wide community partnership facilitated by County Office of Education leaders. Provides professional development; technical assistance to districts and schools for the development and implementation of district arts plans; and makes grants for school-based arts programs. Organizational budget exceeds \$14 million; project budget, \$754,000.

**Arts Every Day** (Baltimore, MD) – Start-up arts education broker. Promotes information sharing and coordination of existing arts education programs and resources for Baltimore public schools. Initial programming focus on brokering pilot middle-school arts-integrated lesson plans through shared teaching artist and classroom teacher sessions in 13 classrooms. Organizational budget, \$300,000.

**Arts Education Initiative**, housed within the University of California – UC Berkeley Graduate School of Education (Berkeley, CA) – Newly formed partnership of six higher education institutions' professional education departments. Piloting arts integrated curriculum planning and instruction for new teachers and school leaders. Limited arts education experience at initiative's commencement. Project budget, \$175,000.

**Art is Education**, led by Young Audiences of Northeast Ohio (Cleveland, OH) – Arts education partnership broker. Piloting third-grade arts integrated literacy curricula and corresponding professional development strategies with the school district. Organizational budget, \$1.7 million; project budget, \$248,000.

**Big Thought** (Dallas, TX) – Fifteen-year old, city-wide community partnership and arts education broker. Coordinates arts education resources and services across 70 school districts, city libraries, childcare, recreation, and community centers. Provides arts advocacy and research services. Organizational budget, \$4.1 million; project budget, \$364,000.

**Ask for More Arts**, housed within Parents for Public Schools (Jackson, MS) – Parent organizing and education advocacy organization. Piloting classroom-based arts integrated lesson plans and teacher professional development in Jackson public schools. Limited arts education experience at initiative's commencement. Organizational budget, \$377,000; project budget, \$150,000.

**Arts for Academic Achievement**, housed within the Minneapolis Public Schools (Minneapolis, MN) – Arts education department and teaching artist broker for public schools. Provides professional development institutes; arts integrated coaching for classroom teachers; and links teaching artists to area schools. Organizational budget, \$6.2 million; project budget, \$1.2 million.

**Interchange**, housed within Center of Creative Arts (St. Louis, MO) – Start-up arts education provider and broker. Piloting arts integrated classes in five schools; developing teaching artist and teacher professional development; and testing early arts education advocacy efforts. Organizational budget, \$4.3 million; project budget, \$270,000.

**DC Arts and Humanities Collaborative** (Washington, DC) – Membership arts broker organization. Piloting arts integrated lesson plans in six schools and providing related professional development for classroom teachers. Organizational budget, \$480,000; project budget, \$150,000.



1 All budget numbers are for FY 2007. Organizational and project budgets are estimates based on submitted proposals.

# Mobilizing for Action: The Theory of Change

From the outset of the National Arts Education Initiative, a key challenge for participants was to translate the initiative's ambitious and far-reaching goals into a concrete frame of work and action steps. While the concepts of working towards partnership building and advocacy were understood conceptually, they were to some degree an abstraction for many of the grantees, especially those who had limited prior experience operating in this realm. This is not an unusual circumstance for any initiative that charts ambitious new ground in response to persistent field challenges.

## DEVELOPING A "THEORY OF CHANGE"

With an understanding that there needed to be collective understanding and buy-in for the initiative's agenda, as well as a clear articulation of benchmarks as to how it would be achieved, OMG engaged the Ford Foundation staff, its technical advisors, and grantees in a Theory of Change (TOC) process. This work clarified expectations and built a shared, explicit understanding among all key initiative stakeholders of how the initiative was actually expected to work, while also allowing adaptation to different contexts in which it was being implemented.

The initiative-wide Theory of Change has proved to be an effective planning tool for all participants, and has guided the evaluation methodology. In addition to the initiative-wide Theory of Change, OMG also developed individual site TOC's to identify how each site's unique process and set of outcomes might evolve.

The Theory of Change identified four capacity areas and indicators of success in each one:

- **Grantee leadership:** Increase grantee capacity to support the Ford arts and education work, as evidenced by increased organizational capacity and leadership to carry out the policy-change agenda.

**Assessment Indicators:** Vision and understanding of arts and education reform; respected as community leader in arts and education; organizational capacity as evidenced by designated staff and data collection capabilities; policy entrepreneur skills (including ability to reframe issues within an educational policy framework and build policy networks).

- **Partnership leadership:** Build local partnerships to shift local policy as evidenced by the establishment of a sustainable collaboration of educational advocates, arts institutions, and educators; and strengthened school district capacities to support and sustain the integration of the arts.

**Assessment Indicators:** Shared and articulated vision for the partnership; diverse and appropriate membership/community legitimacy; adequate networks; transparent process and structure for operations and decision-making; effective formal and informal communication processes; evaluation mechanisms; adequate staff and resources.

- **Advocacy and strategic communications:** Build public will through advocacy and communication as evidenced by greater public understanding and support for integrated arts education.

**Assessment Indicators:** Advocacy goal and plan; communication plan including target audiences, specific messaging and tactics, and assigned responsibilities; impact tracking capabilities; sustainable advocacy infrastructure; school district buy-in as evidenced by leadership participation; and increased budget, staff, and professional development allocations.

- **Strengthening and scaling arts integration program models:** Demonstrate equitable and quality arts education program models that can be brought to scale as evidenced by observable, wider-spread integration of the arts into classroom practice in district schools.

**Assessment Indicators:** Theory-based approach; sufficient infrastructure; curriculum (standards-based, sequential and tied to other content areas); student art production; assessment (performance-based/embedded in curriculum); professional development.

## ADOPTING THE THEORY OF CHANGE

It took more time than expected for many of the grantees to understand the significant role shift required for them to frame and then carry out the advocacy and partnership work envisioned by the initiative. Despite presenting the Theory of Change in the first several months of the initiative, there was a learning curve that most grantees had to traverse as they moved from a theoretical to a practical understanding of initiative goals and strategies (described in more detail in the next section).

*Policy entrepreneurs have the skills to identify important policy-change windows, such as shifts in district leadership, and can activate their partners and resources to seize the policy change opportunity.*



# Progress, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Over the course of the initiative's first phase, grantees made considerable progress toward achieving initiative goals. But the trajectory of their activities has varied considerably, reflecting both the local conditions in which grantees carry out their work and their level of institutional readiness to take on the sophisticated and demanding work of partnership building and advocacy.

At the same time, developments on the national scene have, in a variety of ways, helped buttress the work of grantees, creating important windows of opportunity for policy advocacy. As several policy-change researchers have noted, successful policy change is often the result of leaders' ability to mitigate or take advantage of "open conditions" or "policy windows."<sup>1</sup>

## A GROWING CLIMATE OF SUPPORT

The launch of the Ford Foundation's National Arts Education Initiative coincided with a period characterized by mounting public fatigue with the Bush administration's singular focus on high-stakes testing in reading and math, creating a climate of support for a more expansive definition of what constitutes quality education. As work on the initiative progressed, national and local discussions on this topic were also fueled by the anticipated reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind act – creating a unique educational policy window around which communities and constituencies could mobilize. Further, communications and opinion polling work had begun to shed an important spotlight on creativity and the importance of developing a 21st century workforce that is skilled, innovative, and adaptable – all documented outcomes of an arts-integrated education. The work of DGC helped translate some of these research findings into practical tools for grantees.

Within the philanthropic community, interest and commitment to the type of systems-change work being championed by Ford was on the rise, with the Wallace

Funds playing an especially active role in tandem with Ford on the national level. At the same time, growing cross-sector funder discussions were underway, some of them initiated by Ford as part of this initiative, about possible joint opportunities to support quality arts and education reform initiatives. Additionally, the work of the Arts Education Partnership had begun more broadly to support system-building and policy-change approaches to arts and education.<sup>2</sup>

These national-level developments have influenced the work of initiative grantees in their cities and local communities. In particular, two grantees – Dallas and Alameda County – have benefited from policy environments that show increasing interest in the arts as elements of the core curricula and means for improving education quality. With more than 10 years of arts education work at a systems level, these sites have recently experienced concrete and significant policy accomplishments.

## VOLATILE LOCAL CONDITIONS

On a less positive note, another critical environmental factor continues to have an impact on the work of all the Ford National Arts Education Initiative sites: grantees and their partners continue to work in a volatile, local school district leadership and policy environment. School and district reform pressures, along with local political changes, have resulted in superintendent and curricula leadership turnovers in the majority of the Ford Foundation sites. Six out of nine sites have experienced superintendent and administration changes at the district level at least once since start-up. In the face of this turmoil, the sites have come to realize that their partnership and advocacy activities must anticipate and incorporate the likelihood of such turnover.

1 See Mintrom, Michael. *Policy Entrepreneurs and Social Choice*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press. 2000. Sabatier, Paul and Jenkins-Smith, Hank C. *Policy Change and Learning*. Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1993. Kingdon, John W. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc. 2003.

2 In 2006, Big Thought in Dallas received an unprecedented three-year, \$8 million grant from the Wallace Foundation to build out arts and education in the in-school and out-of-school system. The partnership has leveraged the Ford and Wallace investments into a three-year, \$30 million budget with funds from the Dallas Unified School District and other local funding partners. In Alameda County, the Alameda County Office of Education has been an active partner in mobilizing constituents to support a state resolution providing financial support for arts education. At the end of 2006, the California legislature passed a resolution to allocate \$105 million for visual and performing arts to schools based on enrollment. In addition, the state has allocated \$500 million for an arts, music, and physical education grant, intended to be used for supplies. The leadership of the Alameda County Office of Education is currently focusing on making sure California develops appropriate spending guidelines.

## ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

The pathways to achieving the aims of the Ford Foundation's National Arts Education Initiative have been complex, especially given the ambitious goal of achieving equity and access through partnership building and advocacy, and taking into account the various start-up conditions of grantees as they began their initiative-related work. As has been noted, some grantees had been working on arts and education from a systems and public will framework for over a decade and were able to tackle partnership and advocacy components of the initiative almost immediately and with intensive focus. Others, who had operated largely as arts education program brokers, or whose expertise resides more in the area of general educational advocacy, had to first address knowledge and capacity gaps. Despite this variability, it has been possible to identify early success indicators, as well as fairly universal contextual challenges that organizations undertaking this type of systems-change work are likely to encounter. These are described in the section that follows. The discussion is divided into the four key capacity areas as identified through the Theory of Change: grantee capacity, partnership development, advocacy and strategic communications, and integrated arts education programming.



## Grantee Capacity

Successful policy change frequently hinges on the leadership and advocacy skills of a small group of champions. They exert pressure through effective case-making to change the opinion of policymakers and through support of mobilized grassroots constituencies. The Ford initiative grantees were expected to build their capacity to become arts education policy-change leaders, and also to develop and manage partnerships. All grantees made advances in these areas, although stumbling blocks were encountered along the way and progress was variable – with the more experienced sites being able to mobilize more quickly and work in a more accelerated fashion to address initiative goals.

### FINDING #1: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

**It took more time than expected for many of the grantees to understand the significant role shift required for them to carry out advocacy and partnership-building work.** At the initiative's inception, many sites (including Jackson, St. Louis, Baltimore, Washington, Berkeley, and Minneapolis) focused almost solely on building or refining their arts integration models. As is common in other initiatives that similarly push grantees to make a major shift in how they do business, many sites initially focused on doing more of what they do well and what was deemed to be current understanding of best practice. In this case, sites focused on program development, or providing more programs, and were slow to take up advocacy or systems-change roles required for the National Arts Education Initiative. Some sites (such as Baltimore and St. Louis) had no programming at start-up; they concentrated on launching programs. Once the arts integration programs were more established, and the ability to scale with current

*Communications and opinion polling work had begun to shed an important spotlight on creativity and the importance of developing a 21st century workforce that is innovative, adaptable, and inspirational – all documented outcomes of an arts-integrated education.*

resources was deemed limited, the site leaders began to appreciate the need for advocacy and the need to build stronger relations with diverse political, educational, and community constituencies.

## **FINDING #2: BUILDING NECESSARY CAPACITY AND EXPERTISE**

**For most sites, significant capacity building was necessary as a prelude to taking on initiative work.** Early on, the grantees intellectually understood the value of the advocacy and public will-building work. However, it was not until they made the shift to thinking at a systems level, or building equity for programs within their districts, that they began to think about policy change and the need to build their advocacy or policy entrepreneur skills as a grantee and partnership. The progress of grantee efforts can be broadly characterized as follows:

- “Advanced Sites” – these sites had strong, pre-established arts learning programs; significant experience demonstrating their value and efficacy; and an existing appreciation for the value of advocacy alongside program demonstrations. Typically, these “advanced sites” had been functioning for more than a decade and were institutionally stable. Organizational structures varied: for example, one relatively small organization, with strong leadership and financial stability, relied on a network of professional arts education volunteers to supplement its small staff, while another site was larger and more robust, possessing leadership depth along with financial stability. Advanced sites, already at work on systems building, were able to work aggressively, systematically, and immediately toward initiative goals.
- “Developing Sites” – including broker/service providers – found the transition to be more challenging and time consuming than anticipated. Five of the nine grantees entered this work as direct service providers and/or arts brokers with limited experience around arts policy, education system building, and advocacy work. They had limited or no experience building senior relationships at the district level, or broad-based stakeholder partnerships, particularly beyond the arts and culture community; limited experience navigating school district education policy processes; and limited familiarity with education

reform issues. Developing sites, with support from initiative partners and Ford, worked incrementally and steadily to enhance advocacy, policy and system-building skills and knowledge once they came to understand the role shifts initiative-related work requires.

- “Emerging Sites” and “Start-up Sites” – that had to build arts education knowledge and/or integrate arts education into other core capacities required more resources than had initially been anticipated (additional allocations were made by Ford). One site was new to the arts education field, but had strong, relevant experience in community organizing for education reform. The other had experience in teacher pre-service training, but not specifically in integrating the arts. In these cases, developing the necessary arts and education experience required almost two years of research, engaging with stakeholders, and testing arts education models.

## **CASE STUDY: BUILDING A GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT WITHIN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION**

### **Berkeley: Showcasing how the arts can be integrated into the initial preparation of educators**

The Arts Education Initiative (AEI) is a professional education initiative based at the Department of Education at the University of California, Berkeley. It partners with Berkeley faculty and those at five other regional higher education institutions to explore effective teacher and administrator preparation models for integrating the arts into the curricula. Each higher education partner provides lessons about a different model for how arts integrated professional preparation occurs in different academic contexts. Through presentations, publications, and strategic alliances with teacher organizations and institutions, AEI is building a grassroots network of teacher arts education advocates. Also, AEI uses the individual partner models to show how to enhance the quality of learning using the arts for educators and for the K-12 students they will serve.

## **FINDING #3: EARLY SUCCESS INDICATORS**

**Early success indicators of a site’s ability to pursue policy change include: the ability to forge relationships with district leaders; a commitment and capacity to research and navigate the educational policy process; and resourcefulness in leveraging current relationships to build new ones.** Mid-way through the initiative, all nine grantees had established direct relationships with and access to district superintendents, school boards, district

curricula administrators, and other policy influentials. For over half of the grantees, these were new relationships.

Multiple strategies have been pursued successfully as part of this relationship-building process, including:

- leveraging existing partnerships comprising senior community leaders;
- leveraging the Ford Foundation name and program officer's visit to gain access to new school district leadership;
- strategically recruiting new partner members who have strong relationships with city education policymakers;
- securing a regular meeting time with the superintendent to "keep the issue of arts education on the district radar"; and
- tapping into pre-existing parent organizing networks.

The most successful grantees are increasingly aware of how education policy decisions are made, including the timing of the policy process and the level at which it occurs (state, regional, national, etc.). The leaders in the most advanced sites already possessed the necessary policy entrepreneur skills including the ability to scan the political environment for windows of policy opportunity, case-make for arts integration to broad and diverse audiences, and network in appropriate policy circles to gain support for their agendas. Others have become much more intentional about tracking the policy environment and knowing which issues are most important to policy leaders. Leaders are becoming better at reframing arts education issues for diverse constituents, drawing upon the messaging platforms developed for initiative participants.

#### CASE STUDY: NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM

##### **Baltimore: A start-up focuses on developing policy entrepreneurial skills**

Soon after taking over the helm of Baltimore's Arts Every Day, its Executive Director began taking courses in nonprofit management and advocacy to better navigate the Baltimore School District. She researched the policy reform agenda of the new district administration, and began working closely with a policy-savvy board member to develop an advocacy action plan that specifically aligns with the city and state's broader educational goals. As a start-up organization, this policy entrepreneur skill-building has helped the organization position itself as an exclusive arts education broker for the school district.

#### FINDING #4: DEVELOPING DATA FOR CASE-MAKING

##### **Grantees experiencing early progress have successfully used arts model program data to case-make for their arts education programs.**

Most of the sites rely on partners or external evaluators to conduct this research. By using quantitative data and illustrative story telling, these sites have been able to document the impact of integrated arts instruction on student engagement, academic performance, and improved teacher practices. They have used findings to illustrate to district administrators and other stakeholders the link between quality arts integrated instruction and school and district goals such as increased student retention and improved academic performance. For example, Cleveland used positive data from a recent evaluation of its integrated arts program to advocate successfully for integrating the arts into the entire third grade literacy curriculum (see below).

#### FINDING #5: SECURING STAFF

##### **Appropriate and stable initiative staffing contribute significantly to grantee progress.**

Since many of the grantees were new to this kind of work, identifying, attracting, and retaining the right type of staff has been a key challenge. Many of the service-providing grantees initially found it difficult to articulate what they were looking for in new hires. Current staff were appropriate for the program-level work early on. However, their capacity for leading systems-building and advocacy work was stretched once the leadership began to focus on policy and advocacy issues. After the departure of first hires, staff positions have been more appropriately defined and filled and include individuals with organizing and advocacy skills.

#### CASE STUDY: STAFFING UP TO BUILD ADVOCACY CAPACITY

##### **St. Louis: Augmenting staff expertise**

To ensure ongoing support of its arts integration initiatives in the St. Louis Public Schools, Interchange adopted a multi-faceted advocacy strategy that includes paid teacher and teaching artist advocates, in-school family arts activity nights, and state-level policy work in partnership with the statewide Missouri Alliance for Arts Education. The director expanded his team to include an advocacy consultant who works on communications and coalition building to complement in-school collaborative residencies and teacher professional development opportunities. He also hired a parent involvement consultant to assist with advocacy to parents of students in the St. Louis Public Schools.

## Partnership Development

Partnership building is a crucial component of the initiative's policy-change agenda. Effective policy- and systems-change efforts require a diverse set of partners and stakeholders, with a clear vision and buy-in for the agenda. The process also requires the ability to mobilize partners and networks as necessary, with the ability to assign roles and responsibilities fitting and of interest to the specific stakeholders. During the initiative's first phase, about half of the grantees succeeded in establishing strong partnerships with consistent membership, and meet regularly to work on shared, clear tasks.

### FINDING #1: CULTIVATING AND SUSTAINING DISTRICT SUPPORT

**District buy-in, affirmed through financial support, provides a crucial partnership linchpin, which must be pro-actively sustained.** Four sites (Alameda, Baltimore, Dallas, and Minneapolis) were able to secure financial support from their school districts by showing administrators how arts integration approaches can be tools to help achieve rigorous academic goals as articulated in the No Child Left Behind act, through standardized testing and other assessments. Districts proved willing to provide funding for the arts integration work since it directly served their broader educational agenda.

Yet, as noted, a significant challenge to partnership sustainability is the frequent turnover in school district leadership. Since the Ford initiative began, most of the sites have experienced superintendent change. In three years, these partnership leaders have had to establish school district buy-in, build relationships, and develop a plan with their school district leadership-partners in some cases twice or three times. The Ford grantees and partners have begun to realize that constant rebuilding of the superintendent relationship is part of ongoing business in education improvement. The more successful sites (including Alameda and Cleveland) have developed procedures to quickly approach new district administrators to build new relationships and avoid loss of momentum.

### FINDING #2: ENGAGING PARENTS

**Parent engagement is an essential but especially challenging aspect of partnership building.** Given that many parents have not experienced arts in their own education, a number of sites have used art-making projects as a preliminary way to engage and connect with parents and then enlist them as advocacy partners. Jackson has used Life Shards, a community mosaic-making project for those affected by Hurricane Katrina, as a way to create early parent buy-in for the arts through direct experiences. Alameda and Dallas are also using direct family experiences in the arts as a way to interest parents in the arts, subsequently recruiting them as potential community advocates. Sites are also leveraging existing parent networks – sometimes focused on arts education, sometimes more broadly engaged with issues of education reform and community building – to extend their reach and deploy resources most effectively.

### CASE STUDY: BUILDING A NETWORK FROM NETWORKS

#### **Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership connects with existing parent groups**

Early on, Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership successfully mobilized parents to lobby on-line for the passage of a state mandate for arts education. Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership has continued to mobilize this group, the Arts Active Parents, and recently developed the Arts Active Parents Leadership Council, a partnership that leverages the membership of existing parent organizations such as the Parent Education Resource Center, and the 100 Families Project. These networks provide a membership base and infrastructure that can be tapped for program participation and advocacy. The Council allows Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership to use its resources more strategically, in areas such as communications work and partnership building, rather than on replicating the efforts of existing parent organizations.

### FINDING #3: CREATING TIERED, DIVERSE, AND DEFINED PARTNERSHIPS

**Effective partnerships typically have tiered levels of engagement, with clear accountability guidelines.** By the three-year juncture, all of the sites had developed a clear vision for their initiative work among key partners. Most sites have a strong core group of partners with defined roles. These sites also have a specified reporting structure, and partners hold one another accountable for various aspects of the partnership work. The grantee frequently oversees the day-to-day partnership activities and is responsible for

managing partnership communications, new member recruitment, strategy planning, and conflict resolution. The sites that have had more success with partnership building (including Dallas, Alameda, Baltimore, and more recently and in a more incipient fashion, Jackson, Berkeley, and Washington) rely on partners not just for arts education model implementation, but also to implement communications and advocacy activities.

### CASE STUDY: TIERED PARTNERSHIPS

#### Washington, DC: The power of persistence and persuasion

The Executive Director of the DC Arts and Humanities Collaborative has not let the constant staff turnover and low morale within DC public schools hold back her advocacy work. As soon as the new Chancellor was named, she engaged the Ford Foundation and several partners to present the arts integration work to the Chancellor. The Chancellor's reaction was welcoming, although no real commitments were made. In order to keep the arts integration work on the district radar, the Collaborative has continued to meet with district leaders, including the Deputy Chancellor, the Director for community partnerships, and curriculum content directors to build and sustain new relationships. The Chancellor and Deputy Chancellor have also been invited to meetings of the Collaborative. It is hoped that all this relationship building will pave the road for an easier "policy ask" – district funding to expand the Collaborative's pilot program to 20 more schools.



## Advocacy and Strategic Communications

At the initiative's outset, it was hypothesized that its overall success would rely to a considerable degree on the ability of each of the grantees and partnerships to build top-down and bottom-up support for arts and education, with targeted, strategic communications playing an essential role in this process. As in other aspects of initiative work, the more advanced sites, with a more nuanced understanding of the issues and specific constituencies that needed to be engaged, were able to more swiftly engage in problem identification message development, and plan implementation. They also succeeded in more rapidly and effectively capitalizing on the tools and resources being developed by the initiative's national strategic communications partner. The need for more targeted and grantee-specific technical assistance in the area of strategic communications has been identified as an important focus for Phase II of the initiative.

### FINDING #1: IDENTIFYING CLEAR AND SPECIFIC POLICY-CHANGE GOALS

**The identification of specific and clear arts education policy goals facilitates the development of effective and targeted advocacy and communication strategies.** Many of the grantees initially defined their policy-change goals very broadly, without specific objectives and measures – for example, “increasing district buy-in for arts education.” In such cases, it has been difficult for the grantee to articulate concrete indicators of what such buy-in would look like, or the set of activities necessary to achieve it.

In cases where policy goals are clear – for example, mobilizing the district to pay for teacher professional development in the arts (Alameda), or case-making for the need to hire more arts teachers to achieve equitable distribution of arts instruction (Dallas) – it has been possible for the sites to develop detailed advocacy and strategic communications implementation plans and to track their own success.

### CASE STUDY: TARGETED MESSAGES

#### Jackson “asks for more”

Ask for More Arts, established in 2005, grew out of the unique and highly successful Ask for More collaborative established in 1999 to strengthen teaching and learning in the Jackson Public School District. The idea of “asking for more” – from teachers, principals, students, parents, and the community – has led to the creation of arts integration and artist-in-residence programs in 15 elementary schools, over a relatively short time period. Over the next five years, Ask for More Arts plans to expand its initiative into most, if not all, of the 38 elementary schools throughout the Jackson Public School District, setting clear targets for the “more” it is asking for.

### FINDING #2: DEVELOPING SYSTEM-LEVEL DATA

**Armed with data about the current state of arts education at the district level, sites can make convincing arguments about existing conditions and what needs to change.** Communication and advocacy efforts have been stymied to some degree because most sites have faced challenges in trying to collect necessary data about the current state of the policy goals they wish to address. Without access to systems-level information about arts education provisions in their school district, sites have difficulty determining how much money the school district is currently spending on arts education, how many certified arts teachers are in the systems, which arts providers are working within schools, and the extent of their engagement. This hampers advocacy efforts, since sites do not have a baseline from which to calibrate their progress in changing these key systems indicators. The challenges that sites face with regard to data collection are in part the result of lack of grantee and partnership research staffing, and in part a consequence of the general lack of availability of this information at the school-district level.

The more advanced sites, which possess such research capabilities, have been able to mount compelling and convincing arguments that have swayed local politicians to lobby for more arts in schools in their jurisdictions. Linking program distribution and socio-economic data (see below) has proved to be particularly persuasive.

### FINDING #3: ADVOCATING FOR EQUITY

**In cases where sites establish policy goals, they generally succeed in galvanizing communities by focusing on issues of educational quality and/or equity.** A number of sites (Dallas, Alameda, Cleveland, and Jackson, for example), have used program data to show that more arts partnership programs exist in middle-income communities than low-income communities, creating a gap in equitable access and omitting large numbers of lower-income students, frequently inner-city students of color. By using a citywide equity framing, sites have been able to move from a fragmented arts education program demonstration perspective to a citywide, or systems framework, thereby facilitating the mobilization of a broader group of grassroots organizations and education policy advocates. This approach has been central to successful advocacy efforts, as it recognizes that these programs cannot reach all children in public schools without significant public and private dollars.

To galvanize political support for expanded arts programming, Dallas created maps showing inequalities in program distribution. These maps were shared publicly, prompting parents and community members to apply pressure to elected officials to change the way in which arts programs were offered across the city. In part the result of these efforts, the district committed to placing 140 new certified arts teachers in schools, and to providing 45 minutes of visual arts and music to every student each week in all Dallas elementary schools.



#### **FINDING #4: TIMING AND TARGETING MATTERS**

**The most advanced sites have been able to inform policy decisions at critically-timed junctures through the ready availability of effective messaging and data.**

Effective strategic communications often hinge on timely delivery, and successful sites regularly monitor budgetary and policy decision-making timetables on the local and state level. Alameda, for example, was able to draw upon existing evaluation results and anecdotal data from classroom teachers and principals to case-make for the arts as an integral component of a quality education at a time when they knew that district, county, and state-level budget allocation decisions were taking place. As a result of their timely work, Alameda gained strong district-level buy-in and secured district and state-level funding for arts education. Cleveland and Minneapolis have also repeatedly used program data to present their quality education solutions and programs to key decision-makers, resulting in considerable success in introducing arts-related curriculum components into the classroom.

The work of Douglas Gould and Company (DGC), the initiative's national strategic communications partner, has provided resources to shape and target these communications. For example, DGC's research suggested school-policy messages need to stress how the arts contribute to the well-rounded student with critical thinking skills, create students who can compete in the creative economy, and improve attendance and student behavior. Business and industry-focused messages, in turn, can effectively stress creativity, innovation, and competitive workforce development. DGC research also identified the "arts active parents" as a potential advocacy target, and a number of grantees have focused initial campaigns on this cohort.

#### **FINDING #5: PARENT ENGAGEMENT**

**To mobilize parents and family members as advocates, the most advanced sites have created hands-on arts engagement opportunities.**

Alameda, Dallas, and Jackson recognized that developing enduring parent arts advocacy networks could be facilitated by first engaging parents directly and actively with the arts – by providing them with the experience of being creators of art rather than passive observers. This approach proved to be especially relevant and effective when targeting parents who had not been exposed to arts education during their own schooling.

To more successfully engage parents, several of the sites have experimented with reframing the definition and term "art" to better resonate with parents. For example, in addition to engaging parents in arts immersion experiences, one site is defining arts more broadly to include a wider range of creative and lifestyle domains: the way people dress, decorate their homes, perform folk songs, and participate in generational storytelling. Big Thoughts' efforts to make the arts and arts learning more accessible to diverse community members through this redefining process (see below) is reportedly beginning to unleash local arts engagement in its emerging community arts hubs.

#### **CASE STUDY: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

##### **Dallas: Redefining "art" to culturally resonate with communities and families**

Building parent support for arts was central to Big Thought's Ford strategy. Early in the work, project leaders thought that prior to supporting arts as advocates, parents first had to experience and engage in the arts. Preliminary work focused on providing arts experiences to families in downtown and community arts institutions.

After a pilot and further research, Big Thought realized that the families in their communities already had a wide array of arts talents and rich cultural arts traditions. Big Thought changed its approach. Rather than define these experiences as arts, which were interpreted as "off putting" and identified with downtown institutions, the Big Thought team reframed these local art assets as community creativity resources. Big Thought began to harness local talents that are more resonant with their local communities' backgrounds and interests. For example, a local Mariachi musician was tapped to provide music lessons to neighborhood children.

Also, to better understand the "arts" terminology that families preferred and why, Big Thought conducted research in six focus groups in three communities. There was a strong consensus across the six groups that "creative activities" was the most attractive language for describing the array of cultural activities' children might do.

## Integrated Arts Education Programming

The scaling up of high-quality arts and education models is a hoped for long-term outcome of this initiative. Successful, high-quality arts and education pilots not only provide experiences for children, they also provide communities with a track record, deepen program delivery expertise, and generate data for case-making to broaden community support for more expansive programming. Over the initiative's first three years, sites have experienced some success with increasing the scale of their arts integrated models. Early conversations about quality programming exist in about half the sites.

### FINDING #1: INCREASE OF SCALE

**District-level support has allowed all Ford sites to modestly increase the scale of their pilot arts education models.** The most rapid expansion and scaling of arts programs has taken place in the more advanced sites, where district-level leaders, including superintendents and curriculum supervisors, are strong supporters of arts integration programming. Along with the Wallace Foundation's significant support, the Dallas school district is committed to adding 140 arts teachers to supplement the work of the Dallas Arts Partners teaching artists working in 156 schools for the past three years. The total investment leveraged for this work tops \$30 million of public and private dollars. Through its state-level work and county focus, Alameda has secured an additional \$16 per pupil for arts education. Over the past three years, Alameda has grown its model arts programs from 12 schools to 40 schools in Berkeley, Oakland, and Emeryville districts. Over the same timeframe, 13 out of the 18 school districts in the county have developed arts education plans.

On a smaller scale, Jackson, Baltimore, St. Louis, Washington, and Cleveland have been able to scale from zero schools to several classrooms across a handful of schools (zero to 15 in Jackson, zero to 13 classrooms in five schools in Baltimore, zero to five in St. Louis, zero to seven schools in Washington, zero to 14 schools in Cleveland). This growth has been facilitated largely by individual principal and classroom teacher interest and support for the arts integrated approach.

The majority of sites are currently providing arts integration professional development to increase current

and future program capacity. Dallas, Jackson, Minneapolis, Cleveland, and Alameda have gotten arts integration professional development for teachers on the district academic professional development calendar. Alameda, Minneapolis, and Cleveland have developed a professional development curriculum that is an integral element of their school-based demonstration models. The arts integration professional development in these sites is offered regularly to all participating school staff (including classroom teachers, arts teachers, and administrators), and includes expert, in-depth instruction to support teaching practices. For the remainder of the sites, professional development in the arts takes place periodically, is limited in scope and content, and is restricted to a small number of teachers.

### FINDING # 2: THEORY-BASED AND COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMMING

**The grounding of arts programs in quality, theory-based frameworks and approaches most evident at sites with a longer track record of arts program delivery.** Applying a theory-based framework (such as multiple intelligences or different ways of knowing theories that explore how children learn and interpret new information) maximizes the likelihood that the implemented arts education programs are based on best teaching and learning practices. Dallas, Alameda, and to some extent Cleveland are pursuing theory-based approaches. Program developers from these sites work closely with noted national educational consultants to develop quality curricula, assessments, and professional development. Sites with no prior arts programming at the initiatives' inception tended to focus less on theory and more on getting programs up and running.

### CASE STUDY: STANDARDS AND ARTS LEARNING

#### **Cleveland: Targeting third grade literacy through the arts**

The Cleveland Integrated Arts Collaborative has developed a third grade integrated arts and literacy curriculum called *Art is Education*. The curriculum offers a rigorous, standards-based model with the potential of being adopted district-wide. In the spring of 2007, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District successfully piloted the curriculum in 19 third grade classrooms in 14 schools. Prior to piloting, arts specialists, classroom teachers, and teaching artists participated in significant professional development. Rather than scale up to all third grade classrooms in the 2007-08 school year as initially planned, the program was maintained at a more modest level due to changing school district priorities.

### FINDING #3: PLANNING TIME

**Infrequent and sporadic planning time – among arts teachers, generalist teachers, and teaching artists – presents a significant challenge in achieving the goals of integrated arts education.**

Ford grantees of diverse institutional types and track records encountered this impediment, which is frequently cited as a major stumbling block in other arts education research studies. A key element of successful programs – common planning time – allows lesson plans to be shared, coordination of approaches and concepts to be covered, and alignment of goals of the various instructors to be put in place. For the Ford grantees, common planning time has been difficult to secure, largely because of over-extended classroom teacher schedules.



### FINDING #4: STAFFING AND RESOURCE BARRIERS

**Once institutional will and commitment are in place, the biggest factors inhibiting model scale-up continue to be adequate arts staffing and sustainable funding.**

Most of the sites operate in contexts where there are some arts specialists in schools, supplemented by visiting teaching artists. However, staffing is rarely sufficient and continues to be stretched as programs are extended to additional classrooms. In some cases, when the program model includes one-on-one arts coaches for classroom teachers, as in the case of Minneapolis and DC, coaches are likewise stretched too thin.

For the majority of the sites, the funding for the model arts integration schools is sufficient at the scale of a few demonstration schools. Currently, it is not sufficient to scale to schools throughout the districts. The exception, Dallas, is significant, because it points the way towards what may be possible for other communities as they work toward initiative goals. Increasingly, some sites are beginning to think about longer-term funding and sustainability issues, a process which will likely further galvanize and strengthen the advocacy and communications work that has been championed and supported through the National Arts Education Initiative.

### CASE STUDY: INTEGRATED ARTS PROGRAMMING

#### **Minneapolis: Relying on an expanded core of arts education coaches**

Arts for Academic Achievement (AAA) was initiated in 1997 in the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) as a joint venture with the Perpich Center for Arts Education, a state agency dedicated to excellence in arts education. Since 1997, AAA has facilitated high quality artist-teacher collaborations to create arts-rich classrooms for students in MPS. Using a planning process developed from the work of Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (Understanding by Design), coaches support work with classroom teachers and artists. This established, integrated, arts education model promotes quality education through a community arts partnership model. Through its new Arts Reach project, AAA seeks to scale up the number of schools for integrated arts learning by providing increased numbers of coaches, focused resources for underserved schools to expand programming, and an advocacy strategy.

# Concluding Observations

## Lessons Learned

As discussed in this monograph, and summarized briefly below, the first half of the Ford Foundation's National Arts Education Initiative yields numerous important lessons about the necessary capacities and work required to extend arts learning demonstration programs to all children.

### ABOUT GRANTEE OR LEAD AGENCY'S CAPACITY

- It took more time than expected for many grantees to understand the significant role shift required for them to carry out advocacy and partnership-building work.
- For most sites, significant capacity building was necessary as a prelude to taking on initiative work.
- Early success indicators of a site's ability to pursue policy change include: the ability to forge relationships with district leaders; a commitment and capacity to research and navigate the educational policy process; and resourcefulness in leveraging current relationships to build new ones.
- Grantees experiencing early progress have successfully used arts model program data to case-make for their arts education programs.
- Appropriate and stable initiative staffing contributes significantly to grantee progress.

### ABOUT PARTNERSHIP CAPACITY

- District buy-in, affirmed through financial support, provides a crucial partnership linchpin, which must be pro-actively sustained.
- Parent engagement is an essential but especially challenging aspect of partnership building.
- Effective partnerships typically have tiered levels of engagement, with clear accountability guidelines.

### ABOUT COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY CAPACITY

- The identification of specific and clear arts education policy goals facilitates the development of effective and targeted advocacy and communication strategies.
- Armed with data about the current state of arts education at the district level, sites can make convincing arguments about existing conditions and what needs to change.
- In cases where sites establish policy goals, they generally succeed in galvanizing communities by focusing on issues of educational quality and/or equity.
- The most advanced sites have been able to inform policy decisions at critically-timed junctures through the ready availability of effective messaging and data.
- To mobilize parents and family members as advocates, the most advanced sites have created hands-on arts engagement opportunities.

### ABOUT STRENGTHENING AND SCALING ARTS INTEGRATION PROGRAM MODELS

- District-level support has allowed all Ford sites to modestly increase the scale of their pilot arts education models.
- The grounding of arts programs in quality, theory-based frameworks and approaches is most evident at sites with a longer track record of arts program delivery.
- Infrequent and sporadic planning time – among arts teachers, generalist teachers, and teaching artists – presents a significant challenge in achieving the goals of integrated arts education.
- Once institutional will and commitment are in place, the biggest factors inhibiting model scale up continue to be adequate arts staffing and sustainable funding.

## Looking Ahead

Given the current state of limited public commitment to arts education, the National Arts Education Initiative's focus on public will building is appropriate, timely and very necessary. Supporting the arts education field, locally and nationally, to understand the critical role that communication and advocacy efforts play in influencing public and private policies provides a new and significant direction for the field. If discrete arts and education programs are ever to reach scale, learning how to influence these public and private policy decisions is essential.

As the nine sites continue to work on their advocacy campaigns and develop arts education programs that can be taken to scale, their lessons can inform and deepen the national conversation about what it takes for communities to build arts education systems. At the same time, the Ford-supported national strategic communications research and dissemination tactics can be applied and tested in various locales. As initiative participants and others reach beyond their base constituency to forge partnerships, public support of the arts as an important component of an educational improvement agenda is likely to increase.

The Ford Foundation's National Arts Education Initiative holds out a compelling vision for American education:

*Across cities, students will have equitable access to quality arts programs; the majority of schools in the district will have adopted a rigorous arts integration curriculum across all grades; and schools will have the necessary infrastructure to support the implementation of the curriculum, including qualified arts teachers and teaching artists.*

*As initiative participants and others reach beyond their base constituency to forge partnerships, public support of the arts as an important component of an educational agenda is likely to increase.*



To be sure, there is much work to be done to achieve this vision; the National Arts Education Initiative offers a compelling roadmap for working toward this goal.



# Appendices

**APPENDIX A:**  
**Some Ideas Underpinning the Initiative's Theory of Change**

**APPENDIX B:**  
**Highlights of Strategic Communications Technical Assistance**

## APPENDIX A: SOME IDEAS UNDERPINNING THE INITIATIVE'S THEORY OF CHANGE

The initiative-wide Theory of Change is driven by analysis that the Ford Arts Education team made about what it would take to build the education and advocacy infrastructure programs and to change integrated arts education policies in the grantee communities. Key components of this analysis are enumerated below:

### *The local environment for systems building and policy change is influenced by community context*

Contextual factors, such as shifts in public and private leadership, changes in district and city policy, economic fluctuations, even natural disasters, as was the case with Hurricane Katrina, have significant implications for communities and organizations being able to advance policy change. The impact of these changes can be reinforcing in the case of supportive legislature, or negative in case of budget cuts or natural disasters.

### *Success requires leadership and organizational development for policy change – the policy entrepreneur*

As the work unfolds, the Theory of Change anticipates that Ford grantees become arts and education policy entrepreneurs, or leaders who seek to initiate dynamic arts and education policy change and do this through problem identification, networking in arts and education policy circles, shaping the terms of policy debates, crafting arguments in support of arts and education innovations, and building supportive arts coalitions.

To seize policy opportunities and activate partners, grantees must have adequate organizational infrastructure and resources to lead and sustain the partnership and to activate partners as necessary. Grantees also

need data collection, analysis, and presentation capacities to identify policy challenges, make a case for them, and advocate for policy. For this initiative, grantees need to describe the current state of arts education in their district: how many arts providers are working in schools (number of specialized arts teachers in the schools, ratio of arts teachers to students, availability of professional development opportunities in the arts, etc.). Equipped with this type of information, grantees and their partners can show the current state of the district and why and how things should change for students to be able to access high-quality arts integrated education.

### *Partnerships are the vehicles for arts and education systems-building and policy-change*

An effective arts and education system is one in which the local school district adheres to state arts standards on an equitable basis across all schools, has annual budget line items for discipline arts teachers for every school, and has specific curricula and assessment approaches for integrating arts into the curricula. It also has an allocated budget for ongoing professional arts and integrated arts development. Effective arts and education systems also have a robust set of local arts and culture organizations and teaching artists that provide arts education to schools and classrooms. Theoretically, in effective cities, school district and arts and culture organizations' goals and programs work together to align support for a coordinated delivery system.

Nearly a decade may be required to successfully implement an arts discipline and integrated program in public education for all children with the concomitant infrastructure.<sup>1</sup> However, given evidence from and literature on partnerships in civic agenda-building, benchmarks for partnership development can be identified to understand and track progress.<sup>2</sup>

1 This estimate is based on the trajectory of Big Thought and Alameda County.

2 See for example: Mattessich, Paul W., Marta Murray-Close, and Barbara Monsey. *Collaboration: What Makes It Work*, 2nd ed. Saint Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 2001. Mattessich, Paul W., Marta Murray-Close, and Barbara Monsey. *The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory*. Saint Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 2001. Gray, Barbara. *Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989.

**TABLE 1: ASSESSMENT INDICATORS OF GRANTEE CAPACITY**

| <b>Grantee Capacity Assessment Area</b>                      | <b>Intermediate Outcomes</b>  |
|--|---|
| <b>Vision and Understanding of Arts and Education Reform</b> | Grantee is knowledgeable about the ways arts contribute to excellent education and understands key issues in education reform; has reframed and/or incorporated this mission as part of organizational role.      |
| <b>Leadership</b>  | Grantee is a respected community leader in arts <i>and</i> education.   |
| <b>Organizational Capacity Including Data Collection</b>     | Grantee or partnership has sufficient designated staff and financial resources for daily project management, data collection for policy case-making, and for implementation of the communications plan.           |
| <b>Partnership Management Capacity</b>                       | Grantee has skills in partnership management and capacity for communication, collaborative decision-making, accountability, and conflict resolution.  |
| <b>Policy Entrepreneur Skills</b>                            | Grantee has ability to reframe arts education and community issues within an education policy framework; able to build arts and education policy networks involving diverse constituents and policy influentials. |

**TABLE 2: ASSESSMENT INDICATORS OF PARTNERSHIP CAPACITY**

| <b>Partnership Assessment Area</b> | <b>Intermediate Outcomes</b>  |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Partnership Purpose</b>         | Shared vision; broad common arts education goals and objectives.  |
| <b>Membership and Networks</b>     | Diverse and appropriate membership (including those delivering education and arts and education programs, and community-wide education improvement advocates); members view arts and education partnership work as beneficial to their organizational work; partnership is granted legitimacy in the community; partners bring distinct and necessary networks for influence. |
| <b>Adequate Networks</b>           | Effective, deep network relationships exist to disseminate arts and education knowledge and mobilize for action as necessary.   |
| <b>Process and Structure</b>       | Members share a stake in process and outcomes; clear complementary partner roles and responsibilities; existence of evaluation and feedback mechanisms.   |
| <b>Communication</b>               | Effective formal and informal communication practices.  |
| <b>Staff and Resources</b>         | Strong leadership, adequate human and financial resources.  |

Drawing on this research on successful partnerships and collaboration and on that of policy change, the Ford National Arts Education Initiative postulates that over time, grantees and their partners will share a vision for the arts education work and have an effective plan, structure, and resources to carry out the work. Also, partners will need a robust policy-influencing network of educational policy influentials and grassroots members, including a set of collaborating relationships at local- and state-levels to work together to frame common arts and education policy issues, set education improvement agendas, and put the advocacy and systems-change work into action. Partners ought to have complementary skills, roles, and spheres of influence to carry out the work.

### *Strategic communications is a powerful tool for advocacy and public will-building*

To a large degree, it is hypothesized that the success of this initiative relies on the ability of each of the grantees and the partnerships to build top-down and bottom-up support for arts and education. As savvy policy entrepreneurs, grantees will not only need to identify arts and education policy-change opportunities, but also to use specific strategic communications and advocacy strategies to influence these opportunities.

It is assumed that as a result of the advocacy and communication efforts, sites will begin to see more awareness of the value of, and more broad-based community support for, arts integration as a part of quality education for all children. The results of this will be policy change advancing arts education. Also, in building increased awareness and support, partnership members and key constituents will likely achieve increased agreement, or have developed a common language about integrated arts education programming.

As sites implement their advocacy and strategic communications plans, the value of arts in education for all children, and its inherent systems issues, will be increasingly visible with key education policymakers and opinion leaders. In time, more champions will exist, and they will take on increased actions.

### *Quality arts and education models for case-making*

The scaling up of high-quality arts and education models is a hoped for long-term outcome of this initiative. Successful, high-quality arts and education – often pilot models – not only provide experiences for children; they also provide a community with a track record. These deepen program broker, arts and culture organization, teaching artist, teacher, and school expertise to deliver arts and education programming. Also, these models provide a source of rich quantitative and qualitative storytelling data for effective case-making to build broader support in communities. An assumption of this initiative is that models will be used to case-make for systems change; thus, they need to provide data about their effectiveness and ultimately be high-quality, sustainable, and scalable.

The issue of arts education quality is currently receiving a great deal of attention. Quality indicators are being refined in this initiative and through the work of Steve Seidel, supported by the Wallace Foundation and the Arts Education Partnership. Nonetheless, based on OMG's experience in arts education and Cynthia Coburn's work on scaling quality education models, several necessary elements may be needed for building a high-quality arts integration model:<sup>3</sup>

- A theory-based approach
- Sufficient infrastructure
- Curriculum
- Student art production
- Aligned assessment
- Embedded, deep professional development to increase skill and ownership

3 Cynthia Coburn, "Rethinking Scale: Moving Beyond Numbers to Deep and Lasting Change," *Educational Researcher*, Vol.32, No. 6, pp 3-12.

**TABLE 3: ASSESSMENT INDICATORS FOR ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATIONS**

| Assessment Area                            | Intermediate Outcomes  |
|--|--|
| <b>Advocacy Goal and Plan</b>              | Grantee and partnership have knowledge of issues and trends in local arts and education policy environment; they are able to identify an arts and education policy opportunity and near-term goal.   |
| <b>Communication and Advocacy Plan</b>     | A policy agenda and advocacy plan are developed and implemented; strategic communications plan in place and implemented with identified clear target audiences and specific messaging and tactics; assigned implementation responsibilities. |
| <b>Impact Tracking Capacities</b>          | Beginning to establish mechanisms for gauging public response to advocacy work.  |
| <b>Sustainable Advocacy Infrastructure</b> | Partners have concrete roles in the advocacy efforts and are equipped with the necessary messaging and communications tools; ongoing resources identified.   |
| <b>School District Indicators</b>          | Arts education curricula leadership at district level; allocated adequate arts education budget for staffing at schools; allocated arts education for professional development.  |

**TABLE 4: ARTS EDUCATION MODEL ATTRIBUTES**

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Theory Based Approach</b>     | Model based on research-driven theory – e.g., multiple intelligences, different ways of knowing, etc.; theory evident in all components of the model.  |
| <b>Sufficient Infrastructure</b> | Supportive school environment that includes implementation support of teachers, principals, and administrators; schools have qualified arts teachers supported by visiting artists; model is sufficiently supported financially. |
| <b>Curriculum</b>                | Model is standards-based and follows a sequential arts curriculum making connections to other content-area curricula through shared concepts and processes.  |
| <b>Student Art Production</b>    | Classroom instruction ought to include making and performing arts, not as a product, but as a process.   |
| <b>Assessment</b>                | Performance-based assessments are embedded in curricula.   |
| <b>Professional Development</b>  | Deep, on-going professional development at the school and district levels is an integral element of the arts integration model.  |

### *Hopes for long-term outcomes*

In the long-term, it is hoped that the Ford Foundation's National Arts Education Initiative will facilitate the growth of local arts and education partnerships and that the partnerships will diversify, become effective arts education advocacy entities, and evolve as catalyzing arts and education citywide education program delivery systems. The partnerships will comprise community members, parents, business members, education advocates, arts organizations, public and private funders, the school district, and other key stakeholders. Arts education will capture widespread support as evidenced by public support for tax allocations for arts programming.



## APPENDIX B: HIGHLIGHTS OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Strategic communication work is central to the National Arts Education Initiative's systems and public will-building strategy. As an aspect of its work on behalf of the initiative, Douglas Gould and Company (DGC), conducted national research including public opinion polls about arts education.

Using the research findings, DGC created a series of messaging platforms for arts education. The message platforms identified the problem: "Strong communities need strong schools"; provided a solution: "Strong schools have strong arts programs"; and suggested action: "Help grow arts education to grow strong communities, schools, and students." Table 1 provides more messaging platform detail.

Creating message consistency across Ford sites, DGC also identified a variety of targeted audiences for this work and targeted messages for them. Key audiences include education policymakers, education reform experts working on the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind act, and parents. School policymaker-focused messages stress how the arts contribute to the development of well-rounded students with critical thinking skills, create students who are competitive in the "creative economy," and improve attendance and student behavior. Business and industry-focused messages stress creativity, innovation, and competitive workforce development. DGC research also identified the "arts active parents," a cohort of parents across the country who are supportive of the arts and to some extent already engage in arts activities with their children. DGC identified this national cohort as a potential target group for grantees to mobilize as strong advocates for restoring arts in the classroom.

DGC has led site-based and on-line workshops to assist grantees develop advocacy and communications strategies to mobilize arts active parents and other arts advocates. These workshops build off of a number of web-based tools and training guides including media toolkits, letter templates that parents and advocates can personalize to lobby local decision-makers, campaign strategy hints, and other resources to encourage action by targeted arts advocates. Table 2 provides an example of some suggested action steps for arts advocates.

Also, DGC has created the [keepartsinschools.org](http://keepartsinschools.org) website, an information portal that supports the work of the nine Ford grantees, and also provides interactive

content for a national audience about how to engage in arts education advocacy. The website highlights research, best practices, action steps for different stakeholders, talking points, and other advocacy resources. DGC also hosts a listserv to keep a now emergent broader national group of stakeholders abreast of advocacy changes in the arts and education field. Through the website and national presentations, DGC has contributed to reinvigorating the national discussion about the role of arts education in quality education. Through this work, DGC has also helped to advance understanding about the need for arts and education systems and public will-building, and about some of the message frames that resonate with parents and decision-makers. At the site level, DGC has helped grantees and their partners develop advocacy and strategic communication plans that include tactics and specific messages. DGC has helped prepare press releases for most of the sites and has helped create customized messages, communication tools, and implementation plans as deemed necessary.



**TABLE 1: ARTS EDUCATION MESSAGING PLATFORM**

|                        |   |   |
|------------------------|---|---|
| <p><b>Problem</b></p>  | <p>Strong communities need strong schools</p>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone in the community benefits when public schools succeed; and schools can't succeed without strong arts programs.</li> <li>• Schools need to focus on turning out well-rounded individuals who are ready to take their place as citizens, workers, and responsible members of the community.</li> <li>• Sadly, too many school districts are cutting out the arts and risking our children's futures. This has to change.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Solution</b></p> | <p>Strong schools have strong arts programs</p>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The real purpose of education is to help shape well-rounded individuals and to educate the whole child and this requires integrating the arts into the curriculum.</li> <li>• Schools need to help students demonstrate creativity and express themselves: the arts are the best way to make this happen.</li> <li>• Sure English, history, math, and science must be a high priority for schools, and by integrating the arts you will see big improvements in these areas, too.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Action</b></p>   | <p>Help grow arts education to grow strong communities, schools, and students</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts education makes children whole.</li> <li>• Teachers must help draw out the individual in every child and they want and need more training to be effective in this area.</li> <li>• Ensure quality education for all kids by ensuring a strong arts integrated curriculum.</li> </ul>  |

**TABLE 2: FIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO KEEP ARTS IN SCHOOLS ([WWW.KEEPARTSINSCHOOLS.ORG](http://WWW.KEEPARTSINSCHOOLS.ORG))**

- 1 Find out the arts education situation in your own community.
- 2 Speak out at your local school board meeting.
- 3 Get on local TV and radio to spotlight arts education in your community.
- 4 Write a letter to the editor of your local paper.
- 5 Expand the advocacy efforts in your local community.





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