





# An Education in the Arts

Cover quote:

Sandra S. Ruppert

*Critical Evidence — How the ARTS Benefit Student Achievement*

Arts Education Partnership (AEP)

### The arts

**make learning come alive.** The arts have the power to entice students into the learning process. Engaging all the senses, the arts involve creative discovery and self-expression and engender enthusiasm for learning in children of all ages. Dance, music, theatre, and visual arts breathe life into a curriculum and contribute a creative dimension to school life.

### The arts

**challenge students to think about and respond to themselves and the world of experience in many different ways.** Children learn in many ways – through different “intelligences.” Many students are by nature primarily visual, auditory or kinesthetic learners; all profit from instruction that is active and involves multiple modes of perception and communication. Confidence and recognition achieved by students in the arts are reflected in other subject areas.

### The arts

**cultivate skills and discipline.** The arts utilize highly active, interesting and challenging processes that cultivate good work habits and enhance the ability to concentrate. Achievements gained through involvement in the arts reflect sustained attention and practice, hard work, self-discipline, craftsmanship, and patience.

### The arts

**help children understand their own as well as other cultures and times.** Through the arts, children can discover that all people have the same basic needs. Children can discover the rich and diverse ways different people have responded to these shared human needs. Everyone has a story to tell, memories to keep, and adventures and journeys to share. The questions and concerns, symbols and myths, and values and beliefs of a culture can be understood by studying the objects and rituals of its people.

### The arts

**help students discover creative ways of thinking about questions and problems.** The creative thinking that goes into the arts involves exercising intuition, gathering information, exploring options, taking risks, making choices, refining possible solutions, crafting a product, rehearsing and practicing, and sharing the end product with others. Further, many arts experiences are collaborative and help develop skills for working with others in creative problem solving.

### The arts

**strengthen academic performance.** The arts stress observation and creative thinking. Closely associated with important ideas and events in history and contemporary life, the arts provide a comprehensive informational background and insights to draw upon. Students in strong arts programs perform better academically and score well above their peers on SAT exams. They find that different art forms help them master academic concepts, information, and skills.

### **The Arts Education in Maryland Schools (AEMS) Alliance**

recognizes the critical role of parents as advocates and wishes to support their efforts to ensure high quality opportunities for their children to learn in and through the arts. AEMS Alliance's Parents Tool Kit, published in print and electronically, is designed to enable parents to advocate effectively for high quality arts education programs for their children. Through text adapted from the National PTA publication, *National PTA's Guide to Effective Advocacy*, the document addresses tactics for identification of an issue, building a network of support, developing a message that resonates, using media resources effectively, and communicating with decision-makers. The Tool Kit includes case studies of particularly effective campaigns mounted by parents in local school systems in Maryland.

The Tool Kit provides information on the ways learning in and through the arts support both academic success and improved school climate by summarizing the contents of the findings in the research compendium, *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development* (AEP). It delineates Maryland State Board of Education policy for arts education so parents will know what opportunities their children are entitled to in arts education.

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**Ten Proven Steps  
for Putting Advocacy  
Into Action**

**1. Setting the Stage for Advocacy**

Discover strategies to spark change in programs and policies.

**2. Determining the Issue**

Present issues in a way that clearly addresses people's concerns.

**3. Researching the Issue**

Stay on top of the latest facts and better influence decision-makers.

**4. Building a Network**

Learn how to create a stronger, more powerful voice for your issue(s).

**5. Identifying Targets & Tactics**

Uncover the targets and tactics that will help you best achieve your objectives.

**6. Building Coalitions**

Maximize your resources through the power of a coalition.

**7. Developing a Message that Resonates**

Create an effective message that persuades members of your community.

**8. Using the Media**

Discover how to use the media to reach the most people within your target audience.

**9. Communicating with Decision-Makers**

Use the power of one-on-one persuasion with decision-makers.

**10. Developing a Written Plan**

Organize your goals, audiences, potential allies, opposition and strategies into an action plan.

# #1

## Setting the Stage for Advocacy

The act of mobilizing individuals to spark changes in programs and policies at the local, state, and national levels that benefit children is advocacy. Much of what AEMS: Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance is doing to improve arts education programs, policies, and practices in your community's schools falls under this category. Examples of ways to further this work locally include:

- Talking to all parents about the importance of their participation in their children's education;
- Sitting down with the school principal to discuss issues concerning arts education;
- Monitoring the implementation of the fine arts standards in your school;
- Participating in a school board hearing highlighting the need to build programs, hire arts teachers, or purchase new equipment or supplies;
- Building a coalition of parents, school administrators, and community leaders to support the inclusion of high quality arts education programs; or
- Disseminating information about the importance of including the arts as a part of the K-12 curriculum.

*When initiating these discussions, take advantage of message points illustrating the critical connection between the arts and education as referenced in "Arts Education Research" in the conclusion of this publication.*

Many public policy changes begin at the local level where individuals have the ability to influence and recruit parents, the community, and decision makers to continue to demand positive changes. Parent involvement is an important element of advocacy.

Parents should play a major role by being full partners in all decision-making affecting their children. Through this involvement, they can work to improve arts education for all children.

### **Arts Education Advocacy efforts could include:**

- Organizing petition drives or "get-out-the-vote" drives to ensure support for arts education;
- Coordinating testimony at school board meetings; or
- Beginning a letter-writing campaign to ensure an equitable education funding system that includes the arts.

## #2

## Determining the Issue

Issues need to be presented in a manner that makes sense to people, addresses their concerns, and offers a clear reward that seems worth the effort. Presenting the issue in a way that addresses shared concerns will be the best strategy to persuade decision makers, gain new members and donors, and build a voting base. For example, if you are trying to get community support and funding for an arts education program, it is important to show the benefits to all members of the community, including those without school-age children.

## Researching the Issue

### #3

Shaping an issue requires continually staying on top of the facts. Research must be undertaken that includes gathering data from other sources and could mean providing original arts education data, such as surveys and reports, to the decision makers you are trying to influence. Brainstorm with an AEMS Alliance member who is knowledgeable about the issue for the following information:

#### **History**

- What is the importance of the issue to arts education?
- How will it impact the education and well-being of children?
- Will it result in concrete and quantifiable improvements?

#### **Climate for Change**

- Does the issue have clarity, and will it appeal to a broad range of people and their everyday concerns? Will it bring your community members together and not alienate individuals and organizations?
- Does it require a lot of resources, both people and money, to have an impact in persuading the decision-makers?
- Will the issue strengthen arts education by attracting new supporters or energizing current supporters to increase their commitment to arts education?

#### **Opposition**

- Is there organized resistance to your cause?
- What is the size of the resistance's organization and financial resources?
- Does the resistance have connections with the decision makers?
- Does the resistance have the ability to attract media attention, such as public figures or celebrities for spokespeople?
- How determined is the resistance to prevail on this issue?

## #4

## Building a Network

Once you have determined whether you should pursue an issue, it is time to start building your network of volunteers to help with the effort of persuasion.

When they are organized as a network, individuals become united with a stronger, more powerful voice. A well-planned network lends itself to information sharing, skills building, and channeling individuals' energy into activities that lead to winning major improvements in arts education and children's lives.

Powerful advocacy efforts delivered by a well-organized network will influence decisions made by school officials, administrators, and board members all the way up to members of the U.S. Congress. With each one-on-one persuasion effort you undertake, you will build on the successes and lessons of prior campaigns, leading to ever more powerful and sophisticated campaigns and a larger, better-trained network.

### **Turning Community Members into Advocacy Volunteers**

The first step is to tell individuals how they can participate in the advocacy process. Bring the issues and goals to the local level by telling individuals how they affect your community's schools and children. Explain to them that they are already engaging in advocacy efforts when they contact their child's teacher or principal.

Finally, make it easier for members to find information on local, state, and arts education advocacy efforts. If you have not already done so, set up a website and build an e-mail address book to disseminate important information quickly and efficiently. In setting up a website, include links to the AEMS Alliance and the AEP websites which offer valuable information.

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## #5

## Identifying Targets and Tactics

Once you have defined your issue and considered goals for your advocacy efforts, it is time to decide who can help you produce changes to improve the education and well-being of all children. The first step is identifying the targets of your efforts and the tactics that will achieve your objectives.

Personalizing the target, even though it may actually be an institution, helps make your goal seem more attainable. It may seem much easier to influence your school principal, a city council member, or member of Congress than taking on the school district, city hall, or Washington, DC. Whenever possible, focus your efforts on more than one target. This is especially important when you are trying to persuade lawmakers, because power is generally split among branches of government, and pressure must come from a variety of places to spark change.

**Primary targets** are the decision-makers who have the power to deliver your goals, so persuasion efforts should ultimately be focused on them. Find out who has the power to make your solution a reality.

**Secondary targets** are the prominent members of the community, such as business leaders, activists, and the members of the media, who can help you influence your primary targets.

The **ongoing target (the public)** is determined by considering who are your most likely supporters among the community-at-large. These will be the people you need to get information to. Think in terms of counties, precincts, neighborhoods, and demographics.

## Tactics for Influencing Your Targets

Depending on the targets you select, there will be a number of ways to reach out to them.

**One-on-one persuasion campaigns** are aimed at your primary targets - the decision makers. Arts Education supporters are often mobilized to make appeals on behalf of passage or defeat of a particular school policy or piece of local, state, or federal legislation or regulation. This can be done in person, with telephone calls, with faxes, or e-mail.

- Media campaigns, in fact, all media efforts, are aimed at influencing decision makers and the public (more on these tactics in a later chapter).
- Petition drives are aimed at either the general public or decision makers. They have a two-pronged purpose of educating the community and obtaining the signatures required to rescind or reinstate a policy or to place an issue before the electorate.
- Voter registration/get-out-the-vote campaigns require that you first check with your local and state government for rules and restrictions.

### **Host a Candidate Forum or Town Hall Meeting**

A candidate forum or town hall meeting will allow people in your community to meet local and school board representatives and other decision makers. To conduct an effective town hall meeting, follow a few key steps:

- **Create a forum planning committee.** Include PTA officers and members, educators and school officials, business and community leaders, and anyone else who may hold a stake in the debate. Work with members of your community or other organizations who may have already scheduled a similar forum.
- **Develop the format/logistics for the event.** Who will be invited to attend? Will a large, blanket invitation be issued? Where will it be held? Will local businesses be asked to contribute resources? Your program should not run more than 1-1/2 hours and should allow time for questions from the audience.
- **Publicize the town hall meeting.** Determine the most effective means to invite participants and attendees. This could include posters, community newspapers and newsletters, and radio. Be sure to begin publicizing the event right after the date, place, time, and speakers have been finalized.
- **Contact/invite speakers and a moderator.** Select a respected community leader as moderator, preferably someone who is an unbiased, experienced speaker. Be sure to invite representatives of all points of view, and be prepared to convey the PTA position clearly.
- **Oversee media events.** Contact the local print, television (including cable), website, and radio media outlets through phone calls and press releases.
- **Follow up.** Send thank-you notes to panelists and submit an op-ed piece to the local newspapers about what transpired.

Coalitions are formed when individuals and organizations with diverse interests join together to focus on specific goals of mutual interest.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Coalitions**

The greatest advantage of coalitions is the pooling of people and other resources.

Coalitions may offer additional staff, volunteers, and money. The formation of coalitions also demonstrates to principals, school board officials, lawmakers, members of the community, the media, and other decision-makers that there is broad public support for issues AEMS Alliance representatives are concerned about.

While all these positive things can be said of coalitions, it is important to keep in mind that there are disadvantages as well. Building coalitions takes time and energy. In addition, to be effective, coalitions cannot represent all of the views of the member groups, but need to focus on a common issue or goal.

Organizational structures can also slow down the decision-making process and response time. Compromises will have to be made, and this may require groups to concentrate on one or two common issues. This should not detract as long as the coalition activities only address areas of common concern. It is important not to allow one organization to dominate the coalition's activities or policies.

### **Considerations for Joining/Building Coalitions**

If you are considering joining or building a coalition, you must first determine that the coalition's issue is consistent. Before proceeding, it is important to determine how supportive your members are of the proposed coalition.

The issue you coalesce around will determine the type of coalition you build or join. The following represent three types of coalitions.

### **Informal Coalitions**

An informal coalition consists of an ongoing group with no formal structure. Groups share common interests and their primary purpose for meeting is to share information and plan strategy.

*Example:* At the local and state levels, an informal coalition may be formed to monitor the implementation of new tests or standards for high school graduation. Coalition members may join together with school administrators, school board members, and the local teachers' union to monitor the progress, inform the community, and issue reports. Another example of an informal coalition is the national arts education advocacy organization, Arts Education Partnership. This coalition is composed of more than 100 arts and education organizations devoted to ensuring the place of the arts in public school education programs.

### **Formal Coalitions**

While all coalitions have defined missions with specific goals, formal coalitions have staff or leadership to carry out on-going responsibilities. This type of coalition may be incorporated or governed according to bylaws. AEMS: Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance is an example of this type of coalition.

### **Ad Hoc**

These types of coalitions are short-term and are generally formed around a single issue. An example of this type of coalition is the Maryland Coalition for Excellent Schools, formed to support full funding of the Bridge to Excellence Act.

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## **Developing a Message that Resonates**

Message development and disciplined delivery is key to winning over decision-makers. An effective message is targeted at the people who are undecided about the issue, and should be crafted in a way that persuades members of the community to join with the coalition.

It should also persuade members to become activists for children, persuade the media to give weight to the place of the arts in the public schools, persuade members of the community to demand change, remind everyone of the importance of parent involvement in decision-making, and persuade decision-makers to enact policies that support the inclusion of the arts in the curriculum.

You have already learned how to research the issue. The next step is to place this information into a "message box." The information may also include what the opposition is saying about the issue. By placing this information in a message box, you will be better able to craft responses controlling the dialogue. You will need responses for the following:

- What current research says about the issue; and
- What those with opposing views are saying about the issue.

Once the message has been crafted and it is decided, it is vital you keep the message consistent in all communication. In order to be heard, the message must be kept simple and repeated over and over again. Remember, your members will be tired of the message long before it begins to even sink in with decision-makers and the general public.

Media provides the best opportunity to reach the most people within your target audience at a given time. Therefore, the importance of planning and executing a media plan cannot be stressed enough. Media coverage does not happen without work. Those who work the hardest to attract, maintain, and control the attention of the press will, in the end, be the most visible to the public.

### **Internet**

The Internet is an efficient way to disseminate a large amount of information to your members, targets, and the media. A well-thought-out and designed web page will add credibility to your organization. Create and maintain a current list of e-mail addresses and frequently send “alerts”, e-newsletters, press advisories and releases, announcements, and a schedule of important events and meetings. You can send reporters to the AEMS Alliance site ([www.aems-edu.org](http://www.aems-edu.org)) for further background information on the issues.

### **Assess the media available in your community**

This will require you to research all types of media outlets (electronic communication, newspaper, website, radio, television) in your area, big and small. Make a complete list of these outlets along with contact names, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail addresses.

### **Write a media plan**

The media plan sounds more daunting than it really is. It is a written plan that should include ways to generate interest in your issue; educate policy makers, legislators, and the public; reveal alternative information to reporters; or force a decision-maker or candidate to take a position. Your media strategy will depend on whom you are trying to influence. If you are reaching out to legislators and policy makers, you will want to get op-ed-bylined opinion-editorial-columns placed in your community newspaper's editorial pages and aim your efforts toward the paper's editorial board meetings, where decisions on content are made. If your goal is to reach the general public, morning news radio and press conferences will reach a broader audience.

### **Become a reliable source for reporters**

As a community leader, you understand how children are affected by what happens in and out of school, and you need to make your expertise available to reporters. Try to keep the relationships with the media friendly and honest. Do not be afraid to approach reporters with an issue or a story idea. Remember that they are doing their job, so try to make it easier for them by maintaining open lines of communication. The best way to start this relationship is by calling them to introduce yourself as the spokesperson for your coalition. Tell them you are available to answer their questions, and request that they call you for verification before they quote you.

### **Access to the Media Is Access to the Public**

The story printed or broadcasted by the media can be shaped by the information you provide. Take advantage of breaking news on topics of interest to you by being a resource and a spokesperson. Let the media, and the community, know you are part of the larger picture, but you can also discuss the local impact of a national story. If a story is happening on the state or national level that has local impact, offer interviews, up-to-date information, and anything else that can give a reporter a fresh angle.

### **Daily and Weekly Newspapers**

Daily newspapers cover national, state, and local education policy and initiatives, elementary and secondary school education, and other related topics from many angles - from writing profiles to covering school board meetings. Weekly newspapers mainly report on stories of local interest.

The better your knowledge of the various ways newspapers cover stories, the more successful you will be as a representative of arts education advocacy. Become familiar with the types of stories they cover. Use anecdotes to personalize a story.

### **Pitching news stories**

Pitching news stories is selling your story to reporters. This involves giving enough information to show that the issue has a broad range of readers in the community. You should not call a reporter with a story idea unless you have something that is truly newsworthy.

When calling reporters, keep their deadlines and timetables in mind. A daily paper usually has a 6:00 p.m. deadline, and reporters are busy writing their articles between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. Articles for weekly papers are usually wrapped up three days before publication.

### **Wire Services**

Wire services are news organizations that provide print and broadcast media with up-to-the-minute news. Wire stories are frequently picked up and run verbatim by smaller newspapers and broadcast outlets. The best way to get your information to wire services is by faxing or e-mailing press releases. Once again, be sure the information in the press release has wide-reaching interest before you proceed.

### **Press Conferences**

If you have something exceptionally newsworthy, a press conference is an efficient way to get broad coverage. The most important thing to remember is that reporters will not attend a press conference unless they feel you have actual news to deliver. Keep visuals and convenience in mind when choosing your location. You will have a better chance of getting a television camera crew dispatched to the press conference if the location is easy to get to.

### **Schedule the event**

To get better coverage and readership, hold your press conference on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Weekend articles are not as widely read, and reporters may have trouble meeting their deadlines when covering events after 2:00 p.m.

### **Alert the press**

Alert reporters, preferably via e-mail or fax, a few days ahead of time. Fax a copy of the media advisory to the daybook, which is a computerized calendar of media events in your market, maintained by the local newswire service (most likely Associated Press). Call key reporters the day before the press conference and ask if they have received your faxed media advisory. Prepare press kits by including a press release summarizing the story, a list of all speakers along with their titles and brief biographies, and any other background pertaining to the story. Assign at least one person to greet the media with a sign-in sheet in order to keep track of who attended the event. Prepare the site and your speakers. Place a banner or sign in front for the cameras. Prepare the speakers by asking them some of the tough, anticipated questions ahead of time. Offer them a written list of short, quotable answers (talking points) with which to respond.

### **Follow up**

After the press conference, call all reporters who attended the event and ask them if they have any questions or need more background information. E-mail and fax press releases and make phone calls to those reporters who did not attend.

### **Editorial Board Meetings**

The editorial board determines and writes the paper's official positions on various issues. To arrange a meeting, submit a letter to the editor covering the PTA issue. Be sure to include why the issue is timely and what the local angle is.

### **Op-Eds**

Since most editors receive more op-eds than they could possibly print, it is best to call the editor first to see if there is an interest. Many of the larger dailies require exclusivity, which means they would be the only paper able to run this particular op-ed. Verify all exclusivity clauses before you call or send to other papers.

When submitting the draft, include a cover letter stating any relevant credentials the author may have. Many newspapers now accept material via e-mail, which saves them the time of having to retype it. Keep the draft around 550-700 words; include the author's name, telephone number, and word count in the top left-hand corner.

If you do not hear from the editor in a few days, follow up with a phone call. Remind him or her about the local interest and concern. If the op-ed is rejected, find out why so you can get published next time.

Most papers limit Letters to the Editor to 250 words, so it is important to be brief, clear and concise. Refer to the main newspaper article by name and date. Give enough background on the original story and assume the reader has not seen it or remembered it.

### **Letters to the Editor**

One of the most widely read portions of the newspaper is the Letters to the Editor section. Letters to the Editor can be used to clarify or correct facts misstated in an article or opinion piece; support or oppose official actions of government, an agency, or a special interest group; bring attention to a problem; interest reporters or editors to write about a story not already being covered; or urge the public to support your issue or cause.

### **Television Coverage and Interviews**

Television is driven primarily by ratings, so it is important to have realistic expectations about being covered by this medium. Get to know the assignment editors in your media market and when you call to pitch them a story, make sure they understand the local angle and the importance of the issue to the community.

When preparing for television interviews, dress conservatively, but avoid black, gray, navy, and pure white clothing. Avoid bold patterns and wear something that will accommodate a clip-on microphone.

Be conscious of your hands and keep them by your side during the interview. Use simple words and phrases, and practice sentences that begin with "The real story is..." or "There are three things people need to know about this issue. "

Do not allow yourself to be drawn into speculation or a hypothetical line of questioning. Remember you are never completely "off the record."

## **Radio**

Radio stations also have a much greater need for "news" than television does. Keep in mind the audience that you are targeting and what they are most likely to listen to. Then get to know the news directors at the radio stations broadcasting in your community.

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## **Communicating with Decision-Makers**

The more local, state, and national decision makers you persuade with your message, the better your chances are of achieving results. The effort to conduct activities aimed at influencing public officials is called *one-on-one persuasion*. If you have ever met with your school principal to talk about a school policy, spoken at your local school board hearing, called the governor's office, or written to your member of Congress, you have engaged in one-on-one persuasion.

### **Build an internal communication network first**

The first step to this type of focused communication is establishing and maintaining open dialogue within your own local coalition and network of arts education advocates. This means including advocacy activity at every meeting and finding efficient ways to contact your advocacy volunteers, such as building an e-mail list or phone tree. All of these steps are important in order to assure the quick and concerted response necessary to many important local, state, and national issues.

### **Reinforce the message**

Once you have gone through the steps outlined in the previous section, "Developing a Message that Resonates," you will need to write up a fact sheet on the issue you've chosen. AEMS Alliance has materials that can be utilized for this purpose.

There are three methods one can use to engage in one-on-one persuasion.

#### **1. DIRECT COMMUNICATION**

The first step is to schedule an appointment with the decision-maker. If you are trying to communicate with a principal, school board member, or lawmaker, the person you would contact would be the staff member handling your issue. If you are scheduling an appointment with your U.S. or state legislators, you can usually meet with the staff member in the local district office. Sometimes contact in a district or state office provides a better opportunity for communication.

#### **Draft an agenda for the meeting**

Compile a list of the issues you want to discuss. If others will be attending the meeting with you, assign a specific issue or point for each person. For example, one person can give an overview of the issue and another can provide stories of the impact of the arts on students in their local school system.

**Arrive prepared and on time**

Have your group members meet in the hallway and then go in together. Once in the meeting, immediately identify yourselves as arts education advocates. Be prepared to identify your position and to discuss any arguments the opposition is making. If you do not have the answer to a question, say so. Politely explain that you will need to do further research, and follow up with the decision-maker at a later time.

**Get a commitment or schedule a follow-up**

Before you leave, ask when the school principal or school board member expects to make a decision or how the lawmaker plans to vote. If the decision-maker is unable to give you a commitment, ask when you should follow up. Leave behind a fact sheet highlighting your issues and offer to be a resource.

**Communicate on a regular basis**

A solid relationship with decision-makers, or their staff, will build your credibility and clout. When you see decision-makers out in the community, be sure to greet and remind them that you are one of the arts education advocates who met with them.

**Offer to speak publicly or provide testimony**

Another type of one-on-one persuasion is testifying before a committee of lawmakers or policy makers. Testifying is an excellent means to explain what you want to do and what new information or perspective you will bring to the issue. Procedures for submitting testimony vary, but generally, testimony is written and submitted in advance.

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**2. LETTER WRITING, FAXES, E-MAIL**

This second type of one-on-one persuasion takes the form of letters, faxes, or e-mail to inform your policymakers, legislators, or decision-makers as well as alert and educate coalition members to the issues.

**Identify the coordinator**

Before you begin the letter-writing campaign, identify the coordinator. Whoever is selected should have a good working knowledge of arts education issues and research. This person should also develop regular communication with the legislative chair.

**Make it easy for advocates to participate**

The coordinator should make it as easy as possible for the maximum number of people to participate. This may mean posting the information on your website, forwarding the Action Alert via fax or e-mail, and handing out information at the next coalition meeting. The coordinator may also need to telephone certain members who are not connected to the Internet or do not have access to fax machines.

**Your letters do make a difference**

Arts Education leaders must believe in the organization's ability to persuade decision makers. Most decision-makers are concerned about what the members of their community are saying. While many elected officials do not usually read letters personally, staff members will read them, draft responses, and inform the decision maker about your concerns. Many times lawmakers tally letters and weigh decisions on how many letters they receive on each side of an issue.

### *Tips for Better Letter Writing*

*Remember that letters should be clear and concise. You need not go into a long explanation. In most cases a few paragraphs on each issue will be enough.*

*Letters should be neatly typed in a formal style with name and address included at the top. If you are writing in support or opposition to a specific bill, include the bill's title and number.*

*If you will be providing a sample letter for your advocacy volunteers, remind them to personalize it in some way. They do not need to completely rewrite it, just add some information that will make it unique.*

*Fax the letters if time is a factor. Most lawmakers and policy makers treat faxes the same as regular mail.*

### **3. TELEPHONE CALLS AND E-MAILS**

When timing is critical, phone calls are an effective communication strategy for one-on-one persuasion, especially when a crucial decision will occur within 72 hours. Phone calls also allow you to establish an on-going working relationship with the person or office you are targeting.

Telephone the decision maker's office and ask to speak with the aide in charge of the issue. Give the aide information about the bill or regulation and ask when action on the measure is expected. Explain that you are from their area and identify your local coalition and how many members you have. Tell how you feel about the issue. Ask how the decision maker will vote and urge him or her to follow the coalition's position.

When calling larger offices, you may be conveying your opinion to the receptionist or other staff. Although every office has its own system, all staff are generally trained to take down all the pertinent information and pass it on to the appropriate staff member.

Establish an e-mail list or telephone tree. In order for your coalition to be successful at rapid one-on-one persuasion techniques, you must be able to contact the maximum number of advocacy volunteers in the least amount of time. Faxes and e-mail alerts are the most efficient methods of communication, but it is important not to forget those members who do not have this technology.

Establish a telephone tree by formulating a plan for calling those without access to the Internet or fax machines. Divide the names of people to be called among reliable people who will follow through on requests. No one should make more than five calls, and you should update this list frequently since more and more people are signing up for e-mail every month.

## #10

## Developing a Written Plan

It is very helpful to develop a written plan in which you identify coalition goals, audiences, potential allies, opposition, and the activities to be pursued. Filling out a strategy is a useful way of collecting the necessary information in one place.

Once your advocacy effort is complete, evaluate your success by answering the following.

- Is your coalition a more powerful and better-trained advocacy network? What has been successful and what would you do differently?
- Have you built membership or generated positive publicity for your coalition?



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## Case Studies

**CASE STUDY**

**Parent Advocacy Impacting  
School System Policy**

Coalition for Balanced Excellence in  
Education, Anne Arundel County

**Mission (goals)**

The Anne Arundel Coalition for Balanced Excellence in Education (CBEE) is an organization of parents, teachers, students, and other concerned citizens dedicated to promoting a first-class education and a well-rounded curriculum for all public school students in Anne Arundel County, Maryland.

**Genesis**

CBEE formed in early 2001 as a grassroots countywide organization concerned about changes to the Middle School program proposed by the outgoing Superintendent and approved by the Anne Arundel County Board of Education. The changes entailed a reduction in time in the day for the arts and other “encore” subjects, as well as restricted opportunity to receive instruction in these subjects.

**Major Undertaking**

The advocacy work of the CBEE led to a successful appeal to the State Board to reverse the decision of the Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS). Subsequently, a Superintendent was hired who revisited the middle school schedule issue and made cuts to the arts programs which while less draconian, nevertheless diminished the arts programs to an extent where it is highly questionable that state standards are being met, much less excellence being achieved. Today the organization continues its work with a new Superintendent on board and looks forward to new opportunities for progress.

**Organizational Strategy**

While the cut backs to the arts, health and physical education programs in middle school were a major motivator of the parents, they decided to define their mission more broadly. This made the group more inclusive and underlined their grasp of the overall context of the issues they raised. They recruited members from across the county and sought leadership participation including that of a former school board member. CBEE continues to regularly trade

information with other statewide public education advocacy groups as well as attend their meetings while inviting other organizations to attend CBEE meetings.

### **Planning and Research**

The parents did a great deal of research to enable them to present an effective case. This included analyzing COMAR (Code of Maryland Annotated Regulations) and understanding the Maryland State Board of Education policies. They recognized the opportunity that existed in the strength of the State Board's policy on arts education and decided to focus on that issue.

They contacted AEMS Alliance, as well as state professional arts education associations such as the Maryland Music Educators Association, and national resources including the Arts Education Partnership and the Music Educators National Conference.

They obtained data on the benefits of arts education as well as information about what is needed in an arts education program to enable students to meet Maryland standards in the arts. They analyzed national "opportunity to learn standards" for the arts and alternative scheduling approaches.

### **Advocacy Strategies**

- The parents have organized high turnout and testimony at school board meetings where the schedule cutbacks to the arts and other "encore" subjects were discussed.
- The parents have worked with teachers and principals who also appeared and testified at the school board meetings.
- The parents have met with and written letters to the Superintendent and the members of the Anne Arundel County School Board.
- They have met with and written to the County Executive, members of the County Council and the State Legislature.
- They have contacted the press, radio, television, local newspapers (including the *Baltimore Sun* and the *Washington Post*) and *Education Week*, securing in-depth coverage.
- CBEE has developed an easily accessed, informative website.
- They raised the necessary funds for legal advice, the distribution of research data and public educational information, as well as the maintenance of their website.
- CBEE publishes a newsletter, "The Buzz", to keep the community informed of educational issues.
- CBEE relies heavily on communication with its members via e-mail. It is largely this method that has allowed CBEE to reach a much larger percentage of the public in a quick and cost-effective way. It also allows for quick turn around of information and organization of activities.

## **Legal Strategy**

The effect of the Superintendent's changes to the middle school schedule in 2001 was to reduce the number of students enrolled in arts classes by approximately two thirds. The parents recognized that this policy was out of compliance with the provisions of COMAR 13A.04.13 and 13A.04.16 requiring each school system to provide an instructional program in physical education, health and fine arts each year to students in grades K-8.

Under guidance from a lawyer and pursuant to state procedures they first appealed the Anne Arundel County Public School System policy decision to the Anne Arundel County School Board. After the local board rejected their appeal, they filed an appeal of the local decision to the Maryland State Board of Education, which was successful (December 2001). The State Board required the AACPS to develop a plan for compliance with COMAR. The AACPS brought a plan to the State Board to allow middle schools to choose between two schedules — a seven period day model and a block scheduling mode — both of which were determined by the State Board to permit compliance with COMAR. There were, however, concerns expressed about the block-scheduling model. As it happened, the majority of middle schools chose the seven-period day schedule.

A subsequent Superintendent imposed a variant of the block-scheduling model on all middle schools. The CBEE again appealed to the local board and the state board. Largely because the cuts to the arts programs were consistent with the letter, if not the spirit of the law, the state board ruled in favor of the AACPS (December 2002).

## **Significant Outcomes**

While the parents did not “win” in the 2002 ruling, the group has informed state policy on arts education. The State Department of Education is aware of the limitations of the provisions in COMAR defining what constitutes a program that meets state standards in the arts and is welcoming recommendations from its Fine Arts Education Advisory Panel to amend COMAR to remedy that problem. Further, the state's ongoing process of developing a Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC) for the arts, the *Fine Arts Instructional Tool Kit* linking assessment and instruction to the VSC, and *Portfolio Plus*—a comprehensive set of strategies that will support student achievement of the content standards and for schools and school systems to demonstrate student and program success—recognizes the middle grades as critical for arts education.

- In July 2006, AACPS' then Superintendent identified improving the middle schools as a high priority. CBEE continues its work to ensure high quality education for all students in the arts and all other subjects, but now in a proactive, rather than reactive, mode.
- In 2007, the newest Superintendent affirmed his support for arts education, stating, "It should be the role of public schools to take the American culture and move it from one generation to the next. With regard to education, there is plenty that contributes greatly to turning the children of today into the well-rounded adults of tomorrow that is not measured in the core academic subjects or on standardized tests. Students benefit immensely from instruction in the arts."

## From Students

*Chesapeake High School student Jennifer Hurt* said students depend on the arts to get through the day. In a presentation to the Anne Arundel County Board of Education she commented, “Academics make you smart. Sports make you strong. The arts make you human.”

## From Parents and Students Together

Severna Park’s Jones Elementary School fifth graders protested cuts proposed by former Anne Arundel County Public Schools Superintendent Carol S. Parham. Students Taylor Binnix and Sage Snider created a petition and gathered signatures from their classmates. Said Tivy Binnix, mother of 10-year-old Taylor, “My daughter is in chorus and band and was looking forward to being in drama in middle school.” And, from Sage Snider, “I can read a book or write a story at home, but I can’t have an orchestra in my living room. Let the students have a better education by leaving the arts alone.”

“The best public school systems in this country not only have top test scores but also have an impressive array of offerings in arts and other electives,” said Severna Park parent Ziporyn Snider.

## From Parents, Teachers and Grandparents

*Brenda Reiber, president of the Anne Arundel County Council of PTAs,* told the Board that instead of cutting cultural arts education, I’d rather see you add another hour to the school day. There is documented evidence that art and music help children learn better.”

## Letters to the Editor

*Letter to the Editor: School changes*

Terry Bosworth, in a letter to *The Capital* wrote, "Art and music are the true universal languages." And Pam Biddlecomb, co-chairman of Severna Park Middle School Band Boosters said, "All of the elective programs give kids an opportunity to expand their knowledge. I think it's a real shame that the electives stand to be cut back for these kids. Opportunities are going to be lost."

*Dawn Eggen-Mona, Severna Park*

"This letter is to protest the recent action of the Anne Arundel County School Board that added one hour of language arts instruction to the middle school schedule, while cutting one hour of time given to classes in art, music, foreign language, technological education, family and consumer sciences and physical education. Classes that have been cut include hands-on experiences in cultural awareness and problem-solving, presented in lessons that are age-appropriate and exciting.

This unfortunate action will deprive our children of balanced and varied learning opportunities that cannot be replaced by pencil and paper activities in the additional language arts class. The School Board has made this decision without proof that the changes will benefit students or improve their Maryland School Performance Assessment scores."

*Letter to the Editor from a grandmother – Reading Program*

"Our children should be challenged with a variety of course offerings so that they can explore their interests and abilities and look forward to attending school. . . . Our children should not be deprived of a well-balanced education. Once programs are dismantled, it will be costly and difficult to bring them back. For the sake of our children and grandchildren, please provide help in reading to those in need and continue to provide the well-rounded education our children deserve."

**CASE STUDY****Parent Advocacy Impacting  
an Individual School**

Arts Advocates –  
Roland Park Elementary/ Middle School,  
Baltimore City Public Schools

**Vision Statement**

Believing that the study of the arts uniquely fosters the creativity and intellectual development of all children, the mission of Roland Park Arts Advocates is to sustain and strengthen the place of the arts in the lives of children and to enhance their education by incorporating the arts into other areas of the curriculum, both in arts classes and in everyday classroom instruction. The arts offered to our children shall include dance, music, theatre, visual arts and creative writing. Such a program will enable our students to meet state standards for the arts.

**Goals**

1. Provide professional development in the arts.
2. Make full use of community resources (including partnerships with cultural organizations).
3. Provide adequate exceptional staffing.
4. Provide funding to support implementation of the Arts Plan.
5. Provide sufficient materials and supplies to support quality programs across disciplines and levels.
6. Provide leadership in the area of arts education in the BCPSS, the state, region and nation.
7. Become an integral part of the school planning process by the SIT Team.
8. Meet or exceed Maryland State Department of Education Fine Arts Standards.
9. Communicate/participate in state/regional/national arts education networks.
10. Support implementation of comprehensive arts curriculum that includes dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and creative writing.

### **Additional Goals**

In the spring of 2006, advocates and arts faculty together identified the following additional goals to be accomplished:

- **Curriculum Advocacy** – to create a better instrumental music schedule within the school day, for example
- **Volunteer Coordination** – to allow the faculty to utilize parent volunteers without diminishing their classroom time and energy
- **Grant Writing Support**
- **Publicity** – to enlist parent support for the arts department newsletter, list serve postings, web site maintenance and “Write Place” publications
- **School Beautification** – to enhance school atmosphere with murals/sculptures

### **Genesis**

The Arts Advocates group was formed in 1997 by a group of parents who were concerned that there was no elementary visual arts teacher and who wanted to strengthen the role of the arts in the school generally. Communication via the school newsletter invited parents to a planning retreat held at the school and facilitated by an arts curriculum specialist. This enabled the group to set goals and to plan strategies.

### **Major Undertakings**

The Arts Advocates focused on two strategies. The first was to convince the principal, the school improvement team, the PSTA, faculty and the school community as a whole of the value of arts education.

The second area of focus was to develop resources to enable the school to be able to hire additional staff, secure materials and supplies and support instruction in other ways. These strategies have helped the parent advocates to recruit arts faculty, secure grant support (including the funding of a dance teacher for three years who trained classroom teachers in integrating dance across the curriculum), and to organize and run two highly successful major fundraisers, which have been presented on alternate years. The alternating fundraisers include an Arts Auction and an Evening with the Arts featuring performances by parents and other members of the community. In addition, the strategies have helped parents to recruit volunteers to support the work of the arts faculty with activities such as helping with rehearsals and performances, hanging exhibitions, and helping during classes. As a result, the arts programs have been and continue to be considerably enhanced.

### **Organizational Strategy**

The core group of parents moved quickly from informal conversations, to an organized recruiting of parents with a known interest in the arts, and extending invitations to all parents through the school newsletter and announcements at back-to-school night and PSTA meetings. Meetings are held at the school at regularly scheduled times.

### **Planning and Research**

The parents researched the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits of the arts and looked at the ways in which the arts transform whole schools. They visited a school with a model program in arts integration in another area of the state. In addition, the arts advocates researched the Maryland standards for the arts and looked for opportunities for professional development for teachers in the arts. They contacted AEMS Alliance, as well as the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). One result of their research and interaction with faculty was the participation of teachers in the Maryland Artist Teacher Institute (MATI) conducted by MSDE with the Maryland State Arts Council.

### **Advocacy Strategies**

In all of their work, the parents work closely with the Principal, faculty and staff. They also involve elected officials, members of the BCPSS Board of Commissioners, and other civic leaders by communicating with them and inviting them to arts events at the school. The Arts Advocates of Roland Park Elementary/Middle School have participated in city and state level advocacy for arts education by writing letters and calling elected officials, and the school participated in Maryland Legislators Go Back to School with the Arts event organized by AEMS Alliance in 1998. They have also participated in a presentation on arts education at the National PTA convention.

### **Significant Outcomes**

The sign you see when you enter the building says, "Art Lives at Roland Park!" And it does!! Current offerings include visual art, music, theatre (including a course in musical theatre), and creative writing. All the arts disciplines — including dance — are frequently integrated across the curriculum by classroom teachers as instructional modes.

The former school principal, Dr. Mariale Hardiman has recently published a book entitled: *Connecting Brain Research with Effective Teaching*. Dr. Hardiman shares her extensive research on how the human brain functions and the implications for instruction of children. At Roland Park Elementary/Middle School, she worked with teachers over many years to develop highly effective programs reflecting her research. This book covers brain theory and research and connects them to practice, providing detailed descriptions of exemplary units of instruction developed by the teachers under her guidance. The arts play a critical role in this insightful book, which is available through Scarecrow Press at 1(800) 462-6420.

As an outcome of 8 years of parent advocacy and fundraising and the efforts of Principal Mariale Hardiman, an additional staff position in the arts was added — Arts Integration Coordinator. The Advocates for the Arts parent group is now able to work through the Arts Integration Coordinator to facilitate meeting faculty needs and desires in infusing the arts into their lesson plans. A deep concern of the Advocates is to facilitate the faculty's work, not burden them with additional tasks. This staffing configuration could serve as a model for other schools and their interested parents.

The Advocates for the Arts have sponsored the training of a parent at the *Maryland Artist/Teacher Institute* workshop, supported numerous "Artist in Residency" programs yearly, have planned extra-curricular activities, and "The Evening with The Arts" Advocates Fundraiser. The Advocates supported a new initiative in April 2007 — "International Week Festival" — which will include activities, performances, banquets, and Integrated Arts for the entire school.

## **From Parents**

**"Everyone is a partner in the school's success and the success of Arts Integration, an innovative curricular approach."** Elizabeth Lunt, Parent

**"Working together with other parents has been a wonderful experience; our meetings and events are so spirited and fun. There is passionate support for our children's arts programs and never a shortage of volunteers."** Sarah Wolfenden, Parent

## From Faculty

"Through performances and visiting artists, ranging from spoken word poets to muralists, the Roland Park family has been exposed to the wide range of cultural experiences that our city has to offer. The halls of Roland Park Elementary/Middle School are a constantly changing art gallery, filled with work made not only in the art classrooms but in arts integrated units taking place in all classrooms. The arts specialist's door is always open to teachers collaborating on arts infused into their curriculum." *Katie*

*Gill Harvey, Art Teacher*

"A dedication to the arts in the curriculum both reflects accepted educational theory and drives strategies that deliver results. Roland Park has been recognized as one of the top-performing schools in the Baltimore metropolitan area. We are living proof that engagement in the arts leads to excellence in critical thinking."

*Clare Grizzard, Arts Integration Specialist*

## From Administrators

"Roland Park's arts integration specialist has inspired and put into practice a new position and role for the arts in our school community. This role is inclusive - reaching from our students, families and faculty to the city and the world around us. Roland Park is a beautiful place in which to learn. Our halls communicate a sense of celebration, presenting finished student work, works in progress, murals, and themed work from many disciplines." *Carolyn Cole, Principal, Roland Park Elementary/Middle School*

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"With many schools across the nation narrowing the curriculum to focus on meeting high-stakes accountability standards, the work of the arts integration program at Roland Park provides a viable example of merging high academic outcomes with the enrichment that comes from support from the arts and cultural community."

*Dr. Mariale Hardiman, Former Principal, Roland Park Elementary/Middle School*

"Roland Park is a model school for the educational community. Principals and teachers visit the school to learn the secrets of infusing art into the educational process."

*Joan Weber, Executive Director, Baltimore Partners for Enhanced Learning*

## From Students

*Simon Briggs, age nine, says "Wednesdays are my favorite day of the week because I get to go to percussion class with my friends."*

**CASE STUDY****Parent Advocacy Impacting  
Schools, Community and  
Government**

Bel Air High School PTSA,  
Harford County Public Schools

**Mission (goals)**

The goal of the Bel Air High School PTSA (Parent, Teacher, Student Association) in this advocacy effort was to ensure that the new auditorium planned for our school's upcoming modernization supported the current and future educational needs of our students.

**Genesis**

The impetus for our advocacy was the belief that our students, their families and the community at large would benefit from a new school auditorium that was large enough to accommodate our school's outstanding performing arts programs and one that would allow for expanded use for regional performing arts competitions and exhibits among local schools. Ultimately, the effort grew to include use of the auditorium by community and/or professional performing arts groups, providing students with the opportunity to work alongside these groups in a performance space that will have technical enhancements beyond what would typically be found in a high school auditorium.

**Major Undertaking**

The major issues involved in this effort included facilitating cooperation between the school system, local government and the cultural arts community. Funding was also an issue, as the cost to enlarge and upgrade the auditorium was above and beyond the budgeted amount for the original modernization. Finally, the establishment of a joint-use agreement was necessary to allow for use of the auditorium by outside performing groups when the facility was not in use by the school.

**Organizational Strategy**

The organizational structure was comprised of a cooperative group of representatives from each of the interested parties, including town officials, the county executive, the Bel Air High School PTSA, and the Board of Education. Informal discussions led to an agreed upon framework for funding the enhanced facility, for the additional features the enhanced facility might include and for the general terms of the joint-use arrangement.

### **Planning and Research**

Research was conducted through discussions with leaders in the local cultural arts community. This included hiring a theatre consultant to review the existing auditorium plans to estimate the cost of additional seating and to recommend a prioritized list of potential enhancements to upgrade the performance space. A “field trip” was also undertaken to tour the auditorium at Wilde Lake High School in Howard County which has successfully operated under a joint-use agreement for several years.

### **Advocacy Strategies**

The strategy behind our advocacy was to support the request of local government and the cultural arts community to work with the Board of Education on this issue. Our PTSA provided this support by gathering information from various sources in order to outline the educational benefits for students of an expanded and enhanced auditorium for Bel Air High School. Direct appeals were made to local officials for support, including public comment, phone calls and written letters.

### **Significant Outcomes**

The best outcome is one that enhances the educational experience for students. In this case, we believe that outcome has been achieved. The Board of Education voted to accept \$2.5 million from the town of Bel Air and Harford County government to expand the Bel Air High School auditorium by over 250 seats to a capacity of 800 seats. Planned enhancements to the performance space include upgrading the lighting, acoustics and audio systems. Beyond these tangible results, we hope that the relationships and the cooperation forged between local government, the cultural arts community, the Board of Education and the PTSA will create future benefits for our students, their families and for our entire community.

The next steps include final approval by the Board of Education of the particular enhancements recommended by the theatre consultant and finalization of the terms of the joint-use agreement. The actual construction of the new auditorium will occur as part of the rebuilding of the entire school facility planned to begin in the spring of 2007.

### **From A Parent**

**“The Bel Air High School PTSA strongly supports arts education and we are very gratified that the community was able to work together to provide an outstanding performing arts venue for our students.”** *Cindy Mumby, President, Bel Air High School PTSA*

*PTSA*

### **From A Student**

**“Having an adequate amount of space to rehearse and perform in is essential to the Bel Air Drama Company. As a member of the Company, I speak for everyone in saying that we are extremely grateful for the larger space, and are excited to expand our theatrical productions.”** *Anna Collins, 12th grade*

**CASE STUDY****Parent Advocacy Impacting  
Elementary Music Programs  
& Music Resource Staffing**

Howard County Parents for School Music –  
Howard County Public Schools

**Mission (goals)**

Howard County Parents for School Music (HCPSM) is an advocacy group whose purpose is to educate school board members, administrators, and the community about the value and importance of a quality music program for all students. The primary goal of the (HCPSM) organization is to raise awareness among the decision-makers and the community as a whole so that our schools' music programs have the support they need to maintain quality programming.

**Genesis**

HCPSM formed as a grass roots advocacy group in the winter of 1993 in response to a threat to eliminate the position of Music Resource Teacher and to possible cuts to the elementary instrumental music program.

**Major Undertaking**

HCPSM spearheaded an effort by parents, teachers, and citizens to contact school board members to express support for the music resource position and continued staffing of elementary school instrumental music teachers. As a result, positions were saved. Through these efforts, it became apparent that there is a continued need to educate board members, school administrators, and the community about the value and importance of music education and the resources required to offer a quality music education.

**Organizational Strategy**

Howard County Parents for School Music recruits volunteers in each Howard County Public School to serve as leaders and music advocates in their schools. An information and volunteer form is circulated in schools at the beginning of the instructional year. Volunteers participate in writing and mailing the HCPSM newsletter, updating the organization's website, reviewing award program nominations, and maintaining a "School Board Watch." School representatives meet three times a year to share information and discuss issues of concern. Representatives are asked to "be there" when it is necessary to have a presence at a School Board meeting or County Council meeting when decisions are being made in relation to music education and resources for music.

## **Planning and Research**

HCPSM representatives are asked to get to know the music teachers and the administration in their schools, become informed about music education issues in their schools, and make sure their administrators know that they value a music program that includes high quality music performance. They share ideas with other schools during HCPSM meetings held at the Board of Education.

## **Advocacy Strategies**

With the support of the school's music teacher(s), representatives develop music awareness programs for Music in Our Schools Month (March.)

Volunteers organize chapters of HCPSM in schools so that interested parents may discuss and propose solutions to issues in performance music education that are unique to their specific school.

Individuals collect newspaper or magazine articles that document the importance of performance music education to the mental and emotional development of children. Copies of these articles are presented to principals and they can use these articles to defend the time allotted to music during the instructional day.

Parents and representatives attend School Board and County Council meetings when issues affecting music, (e.g., the budget or time for performance music in the curriculum), are being discussed. They present testimony in favor of adequate funding for performance music education. Such testimony enables elected representatives to defend allotment of funds and sufficient time for music education.

## **Significant Outcomes**

As a result of continuous efforts, positions for elementary school instrumental music teachers have been saved. HCPSM organizes events for Music in Our Schools Month in March, monitors School Board discussions concerning budget and scheduling issues, and helps to publicize high standards of music education countywide. A website and newsletter have been created for dissemination of current information and news. HCPSM sponsors the Howard County Music Educator of the Year Award annually. The purpose of this award is to publicly recognize, thank, and honor a teacher who skillfully fosters individual growth in students by enabling each student to experience the joy of music as a listener, general classroom student, or performer. The goal of HCPSM is to inspire and honor deserving teachers with this award — and to increase awareness in the community of the importance of music and the arts in the development of the child.

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## **From A Parent**

**"As a Howard County parent, I feel secure having an organization like Howard County Parents for School Music in place. If there is an issue to be addressed, HCPSM members are there to ensure that the outstanding Music Program in Howard County Schools continues to thrive as one of the top school music programs in the country."** *Hillary M. Stishan*

## **From A Student**

*Katherine Jean Morrogh, a kindergarten student from Rockburn Elementary School, explained how music helps her learn. "...like the ABC Song helped me learn letter sounds. My favorite alphabet song is Sign Language ABC's." (Katie expertly demonstrated sign language skills while singing.) "We sing the Days of the Week and Weeks of the Month and snap our fingers. Music makes learning fun."*

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**The Critical Connection  
Between the Arts and Education**

# Arts Education Research — Making the Connection Between Arts Education and Current Research

A growing body of studies, including those in the research compendium *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development*, presents compelling evidence connecting student learning in the arts to a wide spectrum of academic and social benefits. The compendium includes summaries of 62 arts education studies conducted in five major art form areas: dance, drama, visual arts, music and multi-arts. These studies and related essays document the habits of mind, social competencies and personal dispositions inherent to arts learning. More than 65 distinct relationships between the arts and academic and social outcomes are documented. Based on these findings, six major types of benefits associated with study of the arts and student achievement are identified:

## **1. READING AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

Forms of arts instruction enhance and complement basic reading skills, language development and writing skills. Utilization of drama, dance, visual art and music assists students in achieving literacy goals by engaging them in their own learning process. Reading readiness, writing (narrative, creative and topical), reading comprehension and communication proficiency are elements of literacy that are fostered through arts infusion.

## **2. MATHEMATICS SKILLS**

Certain music instruction develops abilities that are fundamental to understanding and using mathematical ideas and concepts. Spatial reasoning and spatial-temporal reasoning skills (the ability to understand the relationship of ideas and objects in space and time) are integral to the acquisition of mathematics skills – and inherent in the study of music.

## **3. THINKING SKILLS**

Learning in individual art forms and/or multi-arts experiences engages and strengthens such fundamental cognitive capacities as spatial reasoning (the capacity for organizing and sequencing ideas); conditional reasoning (theorizing about outcomes and consequences); problem solving; and the components of creative thinking (originality, elaboration, and flexibility). Additional thought processes associated with study of the arts are intuition, perception, imagination, inventiveness, critical thinking and conceptualization.

## **4. SOCIAL SKILLS**

Interpersonal skills important to social interaction are nurtured by the arts. Certain arts activities promote positive growth in social acuity - including conflict resolution, self-identity, collaboration, self-confidence, empathy, self-control, tolerance, and appreciation of cultural diversity.

## **5. MOTIVATION TO LEARN AND TO ACHIEVE**

Motivation and the attitudes and dispositions to pursue and sustain learning are essential to achievement. Learning in the arts cultivates these capacities – including disciplined and sustained attention, active engagement, risk-taking, and persistence – and improves attendance and educational aspirations.

## **6. POSITIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

A positive context for learning is critical to student success. The arts help to create a learning environment that is conducive to teacher and student success by fostering teacher innovation, a positive professional culture, parent and community engagement, increased student attendance and retention, effective instructional practice, and school identity.

## Highlights of Significant Research Findings

**IMPROVED SAT SCORES:** Strong relationships between learning in the arts and fundamental cognitive skills and capacities are indicated. According to 2005 *College-Bound Seniors: Total Group Profile Report*, (The College Board 2005), arts participation and SAT scores co-vary - that is, they tend to increase linearly: the more arts classes, the higher the scores. Multiple independent studies have shown that increased years of enrollment in arts courses are positively correlated with higher SAT verbal and math scores. High school students who take arts classes have higher math and verbal SAT scores than students who take no arts classes. Critical Evidence, 2006, AEP

**HIGHER ACHIEVEMENT:** Dr. James Catterall, well-known researcher from the University of California, analyzed data from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS:88), a panel study that followed the progress of more than 25,000 students in American secondary schools for 10 years. The data showed that children with consistent and substantive involvement in the arts performed at significantly higher levels on all measures, whether academic or selected behaviors.

**COMPETENCIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS:** The study, *Learning In and Through the Arts* by researchers Judith Burton, Robert Horowitz, and Hal Abeles of Teachers College, Columbia University, has found significant relationships between rich in-school arts programs and creative, cognitive, and personal competencies needed for academic success. The arts were found to add the kind of richness and depth to learning and instruction that is critical to healthy development only in schools where arts provision is thorough and continuous.

**ARTS AND AT RISK STUDENTS:** "Students at risk of not successfully completing their high school educations cite their participation in the arts as reasons for staying in school. Factors related to the arts that positively affected the motivation of these students included a supportive environment that promotes constructive acceptance of criticism and one where it is safe to take risks." N. Barry, J. Taylor, and K. Walls, "The Role of the Fine and Performing Arts in High School Dropout Prevention", Critical Links, 2002 and Critical Evidence, 2006 (Arts Education Partnership)

### **Americans Believe in the Benefits of Arts Education**

*(93%) Ninety-three percent of Americans Believe That the Arts Are Vital to Providing a Well-Rounded Education for Children*, according to a May 2005 Harris Poll on the attitudes of Americans toward arts education. (Commissioned by Americans for the Arts)

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) includes the arts as core subjects. However, the focus of accountability on reading and math has altered priorities. Administrators are often tempted to reduce arts education opportunities or eliminate arts programs in response to the challenges posed by the NCLB Act. In doing so, they may be eliminating critical links to academic success for many students and denying students the opportunity to develop the crucial cognitive skills and motivations they need to achieve at high levels. In some schools, on the other hand, NCLB has served as a catalyst for strengthening efforts to raise student achievement and improve student performance in other core subjects through integrating the arts.

## Maryland Fine Arts Education Policy

The State of Maryland has achieved significant accomplishments in fine arts education, and many schools in the state benefit from strong arts programs. Students are required to earn one credit in the fine arts to receive the Maryland High School Diploma. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has established content and achievement standards for dance, music, theatre, and visual arts programs in the public schools: *Maryland Essential Learner Outcomes for the Fine Arts* (ELOs). The MSDE has developed the Voluntary State Curriculum in the Fine Arts (VSC) based on the ELOs; has supported the development and implementation of Fine Arts Strategic Plans by local jurisdictions; and has created *The Maryland Fine Arts Instructional Tool Kit* linking assessment with the VSC and best instructional practices. *Portfolio Plus*, a comprehensive, multidimensional set of strategies designed to ensure the quality of fine arts instruction, is under development.

High quality professional development is being provided to enable teachers to integrate the arts into other content areas. In early 2007, the Maryland Higher Education Commission approved Maryland's Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Arts Integration. The Certificate is a multi-institutional graduate credential awarded by Towson University with the participation of the University of Maryland, College Park; University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC); and Johns Hopkins University. It is designed for educators who wish to expand their capacity to use arts integration as a strategy for enabling their students to learn in and through the arts.

Although these Maryland school reform initiatives have been enacted, arts curricula and arts programs have been cut in many local schools. Disparity in arts education quality and opportunity is consequential; it is often the most disadvantaged students who are most impacted by the reduction and elimination of programs. Advocacy is critical to ensure high quality arts education for all Maryland schoolchildren at all levels of education. The arts are essential for children to thrive in school and in life.

*Special thanks to the Arts Education Partnership and The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies for the use of the principal text appearing in this brochure.*

*For more information, consult the Critical Links section of the Arts Education Partnership's Web site at [www.aep-arts.org](http://www.aep-arts.org) through the Evaluation and Research toolbar or contact the AEMS Alliance office at (410) 783-2367, or [www.aems-edu.org](http://www.aems-edu.org)*

## About AEMS — Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance

Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance is a statewide partnership dedicated to advancing the cause of the arts as a basic component of public education.

**The AEMS Alliance was initiated by the Maryland State Arts Council in partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education in June of 1992 in response to growing concern about the diminishing quality as well as quantity of arts education. AEMS Alliance was incorporated as a 501 (c)(3) Maryland non profit organization in November 1997. In 2006, the AEMS Alliance became a member of the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network.**

The AEMS Alliance mission is to build support for high-quality, systemic arts education – dance, music, theatre and visual arts – for all Maryland schoolchildren. AEMS Alliance actively advocates local and statewide policy to ensure that every child in Maryland has high-quality opportunities for learning both in and through the arts.

### **AEMS Alliance Goals**

- To impact the formulation and implementation of policies at the state and local level that support enabling all students to meet the Maryland Fine Arts Standards.
- To stimulate the development of high-quality arts education programs that integrate the arts substantively into other subject areas and use community resources effectively.
- To cultivate support for arts education among many constituencies, particularly decision makers.

AEMS Alliance welcomes your feedback on the Parents Tool Kit. Please contact us at:

AEMS: Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance  
175 W. Ostend Street, Suite A-3  
Baltimore, Maryland 21230  
410-783-2367  
[www.aems-edu.org](http://www.aems-edu.org)

*The AEMS Alliance is a member of the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network*









**A**rts **E**ducation in **M**aryland **S**chools Alliance

175 W. Ostend Street  
Suite A-3  
Baltimore, Maryland 21230

410-783-2367

[www.aems-edu.org](http://www.aems-edu.org) **WEB**

[info@aems-edu.org](mailto:info@aems-edu.org) **WMAIL**