

# *The Arts and School Reform:*

LESSONS AND POSSIBILITIES  
FROM THE ANNENBERG  
CHALLENGE ARTS PROJECTS



*Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University*



DEDICATION

*To the Memory of Walter H. Annenberg*

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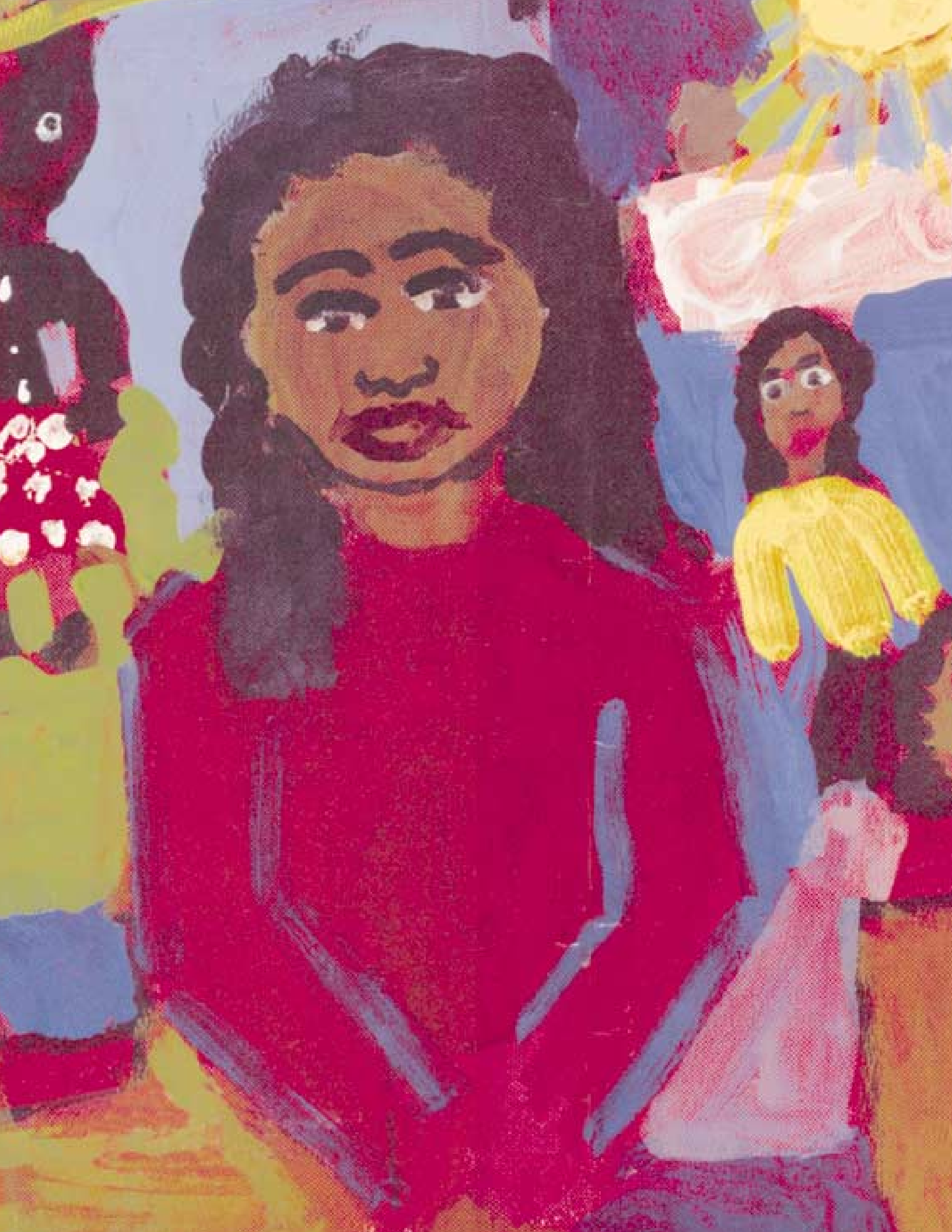
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*Introduction:*

IN RETURN FOR A GENEROUS GIFT

*[Art] collectors have an ethical obligation to the general public. Philosophically, I've come more and more to the conclusion that great works of art should ultimately belong to the people.*

—Ambassador Walter H. Annenberg

Drawing by Sonia Martins, a fifth-grader  
at P.S. 144 (Queens, NY), the Magnet School of Arts  
and Technology in New York City

AMBASSADOR WALTER ANNENBERG publicly urged that art should belong to the people when he placed his own art collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where any day of the week hundreds, if not thousands, of people could enjoy the paintings another collector might have kept for his private enjoyment. But the Ambassador's commitment to sharing the arts did not stop with displaying great works. In his view, the passion, hard work, and communicative power characteristic of the arts could stoke and inform the work of other public institutions; in particular, the effort to improve public education.

Ambassador Annenberg translated his belief into action. In 1995, he gave \$500 million to improve the quality of public education, earmarking \$20 million for arts education. In fact, the arts were the only specific discipline he charged with the vital work of whole-school reform.

Following a nationwide call for proposals, the Annenberg Foundation selected three promising projects, each with its own approach to guaranteeing that the arts would become an integral part of public school learning.

- Arts for Academic Achievement – Minneapolis
- The Center for Arts Education – New York City
- Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge – A National Network

The sites are described in brief on pages 8–9 and more fully on pages 45–48.

#### A DUAL CHALLENGE: WHOLE-SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND ARTS EDUCATION

Each of the three Challenge Arts projects was charged with a double mission: to promote whole-school change and to ensure the presence and the quality of the arts in public education. This dual challenge raises some obvious questions: What could school reform do for the arts? What could the arts do for school reform? Aren't they two entirely separate worlds? However, as the work of the projects progressed, there turned out to be important – sometimes unsuspected – synergies and lessons.

#### What Arts Education Does for Standards-based Reform: Building Capacity and Redefining Excellence

The Challenge Arts projects were funded between 1996 and 2002, a period when standards were emerging as a major tool for raising the expectations and performance of American students. These standards were high, criterion-referenced, and carried a revolutionary view of all learners as competent. Instead of the minimum-competency performance that was the “norm” for many children during the last century, the new goal was to prepare students to function effectively in a knowledge-based economy, to be active citizens and effective members of culturally complex communities.

Standards-based reform has introduced new regulations and more stringent accountability, often with stiff sanctions attached for students or schools that fail to meet the newly established standards. But the work of realizing the standards can't be ordered into existence. No amount of professional development can enforce working in new and unfamiliar ways. In this atmosphere, arts educators took an approach to change and improvement that emphasized the “human face” of school reform. They were more interested in “motivating” school improvement and than in “driving” it. Their presence stimulated far-reaching discussions of what fuels human effort.

The idea of high, common expectations for every student's work is revolutionary. Nearly fifty years before the Arts Challenge, *Brown v. Board of Education* gave families and educators alike the legal grounds for insisting on equal *inputs* for all students: the same per capita spending, courses, teacher qualifications, library holdings, and so on. But standards-based reform has redefined equity in terms of *results*. It assumes that all students can benefit from high-quality instruction. Each one deserves to complete a public education having had not only the instruction, but the supports and resources he or she needs in order to perform at the height of his or her capacities. In other words, competence has been redefined in terms of excellence.

A second major contribution arts education makes to school reform is a probing discussion of what we mean by excellence. Many artists and arts teachers would argue that excellence is not defined by how few people have it. Instead, they see it as their





job to make the dimensions of excellence public and to create feasible steps toward its attainment by many students. The arts also redefine excellence in terms of *variety*. Actors develop distinctive approaches to playing Scrooge or Willy Loman; August Wilson's plays raise questions that are different from those that animate Edward Albee's works. An excellent photo assignment is one in which many students produce powerful and *distinctive* images. Arts educators regularly point out how important it is that the standards do not "standardize" student work, trading away originality and variation.

**What Whole-School Reform  
Does for Arts Education:  
Accountability and Sustainability**

The generous grants from the Annenberg Foundation came at an auspicious moment: by 1995 the arts had been included among subjects for which national standards were developed, plans for a national assessment in the arts were under way, and compelling research debates about the effects of arts education were forming. In addition, the Challenge Arts grants created a promising set of circumstances: national attention, five years of ample funding, the supports of ongoing evaluation, and colleagues.

But in tackling the second part of their challenge – ensuring the presence and quality of arts instruction

in schools – the Challenge Arts projects learned important lessons about accountability and sustainability.

In accepting the Ambassador's generous gift, classroom teachers, arts educators, and teaching artists also accepted the challenge of accountability. The projects were responsible for demonstrating how their disciplines, approaches, and values could make a contribution to the quality of public education – not only in studios and auditoriums, but in the crucible of daily practice and ordinary conditions. In place of broad claims that arts education could transform contemporary schooling, advocates for arts education had to develop focused theories of action, answering such questions as: Why are the arts effective levers for change? and What are the unique contributions of the arts to school reform? They also needed to present compelling evidence for the importance of arts education in the midst of growing calls for accountability in public education.

To engender school improvement, arts educators also had to face questions of quality, dosage, and duration: in other words, under what conditions were there results for students and communities? If arts educators wanted to be a force in school reform, projects had to last – that is, arts educators were responsible for making the arts a sustainable, rather than a hoped-for, force in the push for educational excellence.

## Meeting the Challenge

Each of the Challenge Arts projects faced a tenacious set of beliefs and practices relating to arts education:

- *The belief that talent is innate and, thus, unteachable.*

Americans have a problematic but widely held belief that talent or intelligence is innate and immutable. This is much like the equally troublesome belief that intelligence is highly correlated with class, gender, national origin, and race. According to this reasoning, some children are born talented in the arts, while others lack that gift. The first need and deserve arts education; the remainder do not benefit from instruction.

- *The rationale that “Exposure is enough.”*

Throughout the history of American public education, the arts have been viewed as a source of enrichment, rather than a source of learning: more like manners than mathematics. Viewed in this way, access to the arts through electives or once-a-year trips to a ballet or theater production or purchased on-site events would ignite gifted and passionate students; other students would at least be “exposed” to the arts.

- *The American habit of privatizing opportunity.*

When schools fail to offer the arts, families with the economic means can purchase art or music lessons, arts camp, and theater tickets to fill the gap. This pattern of behavior, and the attitudes

# The Challenge Arts Projects

## Arts for Academic Achievement in Minneapolis: A Sustainable Effort

Arts for Academic Achievement (AAA) was a five-year partnership between the Minneapolis Public Schools and the Perpich Center for Arts Education. The program was designed to accelerate student achievement in and through the arts. Thus, the school programs supported the integration of the arts into the academic curriculum. The project was funded by a \$3.2-million grant from the Annenberg Foundation, matched two-for-one from public and private sources.

A distinguishing feature of the AAA project was its close and long-range planning with the Minneapolis school district. In this joint effort, both groups worked to ensure that the project and the enhanced attention to the arts would become a permanent feature of the Minneapolis Public Schools. This effort included substantial professional development for adult learners. For instance, the project cosponsored an annual conference for 200 artists, “Shape-shifting: The Magic of the Teaching Artist,” and several smaller workshops for principals and administrators on the power of integrative arts education. Teachers engaged in research on the effects of the arts

on student learning and they attended cultural events as adult learners. AAA collaborated with researchers from the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, a major educational research and evaluation institute at the University of Minnesota. The evaluation examined the effects of the program on students’ academic achievement, teachers’ approach to instruction and learning, as well as community support for the arts. The work of AAA continues through a grant from the federal Department of Education and local funding.

## The Center for Arts Education in New York City: Sustained Partnerships

The Center for Arts Education (CAE) in New York City received a \$12-million, two-for-one matching grant to institutionalize arts instruction as part of the core curriculum and to use the arts as a catalyst for whole-school change. At the heart of the Center’s work is a \$21.5-million dollar grants program which combines the original Annenberg dollars with locally raised matching funds. The center of the program was a set of multi-year “contextual” partnerships between individual schools and cultural organizations in eighty schools from most of the city’s thirty-two districts, directly serving 54,000 students. The thrust was to coordinate a fragmented set of cultural offerings throughout the city into a coherent, but far from homogenized, system of cultural opportunities from which schools could develop sustained, high-quality rela-

that prompt it, undermine a community's public obligation to provide arts opportunities for all children. The result is that artistic creation and participation become "gated communities."

Each project was charged with building arts education programs that would foster quite a different set of beliefs and commitments:

- *Large numbers of students can learn in the arts*, whether as creators, performers, critics, or scholars. Even if only a few become practicing adult artists, the goal is for public education to produce individuals who can express themselves and the lives of their communities in rich and enduring ways.

- *Exposure is not enough*. No one would suggest that witnessing a physics demonstration was enough to gain command of that complex science. Similarly, attending two or three events a year will never yield adults who understand and value the arts.

- *All students deserve opportunities for long-term learning in the arts*. While many students experience some arts teaching in their early grades, few students continue to have arts instruction in middle or high school. This shrinks the number of students who have a long career in the arts. We would never dream of truncating students' trajectory in mathematics.

tionships. CAE also developed the Parents as Arts Partners grants program to support parent involvement in arts learning activities, and the Career Development Program that placed high school students and faculty in arts-related internships. CAE also supported a wide range of professional development opportunities for classroom teachers, giving them access to the culture of New York City. Researchers at the Center for Children and Technology (part of Education Development Center) provided ongoing evaluation for the Center's work. The evaluation focused chiefly on an in-depth qualitative analysis of the evolving partnerships between specific schools and the arts organizations with which they collaborated. In addition, the evaluation followed the effects of arts engagement on children's literacy scores on the New York State tests. CAE continues its work through a second grant from the Annenberg Foundation.

### **Transforming Education through the Arts Challenge: A National Network**

The Transforming Education through the Arts Challenge (TETAC) aimed to enhance the quality and status of arts education and to examine the extent to which the arts can complement and support overall school reform. TETAC drew on the heritage of Discipline-based Arts Education and was the one Challenge Arts project to focus chiefly on the visual arts and exclusively on learning in and about the arts. A \$4.3-million Challenge grant to the National Arts Education Consortium (NAEC) for the TETAC project was matched

one-for-one by the J. Paul Getty Trust. An additional one-for-one match was raised from local funders by the NAEC member organizations. TETAC comprised the six regional NAEC member organizations and their thirty-five partner schools in eight states, involving 25,000 students and 1,600 teachers. NAEC's member organizations provided their partner schools with services and materials to deepen their understanding of comprehensive arts education and whole-school reform and to assist them in developing plans and strategies for realizing and sustaining the program's goals. TETAC staff and advisors collaborated with evaluators at the educational research organization Westat to design measures of the project's success. These measures examined two major outcomes: 1) elementary students' visual arts learning (using items that

build on the 1996 NAEP national assessment of arts learning) and 2) teachers' design of effective units of study that integrate the arts as a way of understanding challenging concepts.

More detailed descriptions of the projects appear on pages 45–48.



## THE RETURN ON A GENEROUS GIFT

Often, in the wake of attempting large-scale school change, important and hard-won lessons blur or even disappear completely. The result is a dangerous amnesia: later projects are doomed to reinvent, rather than build on, the practices and insights of earlier efforts. Participants and observers alike come away with the sense that school reform doesn't progress – it only endures. As one middle school principal remarked, "I've been to six 'first meetings' for the revitalization of arts education since coming to this district." The Challenge Arts projects serve as an antidote to such amnesia and perpetual first meetings.

The individual projects were charged with presenting their specific methods, findings, and implications, each publishing its own evaluation; individual

participants will continue to contribute their own experiences to the public record. The purpose of this essay is to consider the return on Ambassador Annenberg's generous gift from the collective efforts of the Challenge Arts projects.

### The Field Study

This essay draws upon five years of work in the three projects, each in a very different civic setting. To do justice to the complexity and scope of the Annenberg Arts Challenge, information for the essay was collected and refined over a three-year period. This process included:

- A document review of the half-year and annual reports of the three projects to the Annenberg Foundation. This review identified the specific goals, theories of action, and measures of success for each project.
- Two meetings of the entire Arts Challenge to discuss cross-cutting themes emerging from their work.
- Interviews with a number of arts educators across the country to find out what they were interested in learning from the work of Annenberg Challenge Arts projects.
- Visits to each of the Challenge Arts sites. Each visit averaged two days and included classroom observations and interviews with teachers, teaching artists, and students in at least two and as many as four schools, as well as observations of staff meetings, classroom interactions, artist residency activities, and interviews with district central office personnel, building principals, and site coordinators.
- Samples of student work via video, Web, and print media.
- Samples of teachers' and teaching artists' work in the form of journals and teacher research projects.
- Published papers and presentations from each of the projects.

The final draft of this essay was reviewed and refined by staff in the three projects.



## Lessons and Possibilities

This essay has two aims. The first is to identify lessons for school reform that emerged when arts education was used as the agent of change. The second is to identify what arts educators learned from working in the context of whole-school reform.

Overall, the Annenberg grants to arts education have returned four broad lessons. The first two are based in what arts education brought to whole-school reform.

- *Lesson 1: Build Reform from Within*

Many educators now understand that school reform is not a solo flight; it requires networks of colleagues all pulling in the same direction. But these connections are merely social if they lack inquiry and candor. Reform must begin from within.

- *Lesson 2: Make Excellence Equitable*

The work of the Challenge Arts projects suggests that arts education is effective – and well worth studying – for the ways in which it provides equitable access to excellence. Part of this genius resides in challenging work for currently low-performing students. Another part lies in replacing the heavy-handed strategies of remediation with an instructional repertoire – a range of ways of reaching students.

The second two lessons describe what arts educators learned from working in the field of school reform.

- *Lesson 3: Rethink Accountability*

Part of standards-based reform is an ongoing inquiry into what works and why. This requires data, careful and public examination of that data, and the mutual commitment to *using* data to inform and possibly change current practice.

- *Lesson 4: Begin with Permanence in Mind*

It is never too early to begin surviving. The Arts Challenge projects argue that it takes time to develop good practices. Time will never be devoted to gathering and refining good practice without the stability afforded by ongoing funding and community support.



Finally, the work of the Challenge Arts projects holds out two possibilities:

- *Cultural Well-being*

In exactly the same way that every student deserves physical health and academic opportunity, we owe young people the skills and experiences to become contributing members of the cultural communities in which they live. This form of well-being has to become an integral part of the mission of public education.

- *Learning Systems*

For students to become contributing members of their cultural communities, they require more than schools. They deserve a broader learning system that allies schools with libraries, museums, community centers, and many other cultural and community resources. They also deserve the time, mentors, and means of access that help them to become creators and thoughtful critics. Young people have the right to be more than consumers and witnesses.





## *The Lessons*

*The Annenberg Foundation's request for proposals charged the arts education projects to support whole-school improvement as well as students' artistic skills and knowledge. This thrust the organizations, along with their cultural partners, into a new and larger arena: school reform.*







## *Lesson 1:*

### BUILD REFORM FROM WITHIN

**D**ESPITE TWENTY YEARS of concentrated efforts in reform, we are far from achieving the promise held out by high standards for all children. Current policy makers, impatient with the pace and extent of improvement, have wagered that stiff external accountability systems, coupled with serious consequences, can make the needed difference. The bet is that external forces – testing, published results, mandated technical assistance, school closings, district takeovers – will galvanize improvement.

The work of the Challenge Arts projects suggests this is an impoverished wager. One curriculum supervisor described her sense of what's missing:

It's attention to the human heart of school reform. If there are no rewards, there is no will. If there's no respect, there's no new capacity. If there's no candor, there's no change.

By relying on external forces, school reformers ignore the motivations and rewards that sustain people in doing difficult work. Since educators work in buildings full of adults, we assume they must have the colleagues they need. With so many organizations offering “outreach,” we presume that schools have the partnerships they need. But while we set policy about in-district residence, professional attire, and extra compensation, we rarely work explicitly toward establishing an ethics of school reform, that mix of

mutual responsibilities, candor, and respect we need to make progress.

The three Challenge Arts projects show how critical these internal elements can be. They demonstrate that educators have to acknowledge the importance of intrinsic rewards, as well as extrinsic sanctions, in fueling change. Educators are also responsible for candor – school professionals must be honest with one another whenever they see obstacles to student learning. In return, educators deserve reciprocal relationships with artists and cultural partners that can help them make a substantial difference in student learning. In fact, participants in the three arts projects insist that such a compact ought to be seen as necessary infrastructure on a level with budgeting, hiring, or funding.

#### **Fuel Change: The Power of Intrinsic Rewards**

When we outline the resources needed for school reform, we tend to speak in terms of teacher recruitment, professional development, school funding, or rethinking the superintendency. We don't ask: Where does the personal will to make steady and difficult change come from? or What are the renewable sources of this will? We instantly nominate the strategic and skirt the personal – at great cost. Schools, too, regularly make improvements in the name of student achievement without consulting the students themselves. And central offices rarely say: “There's no choice about whether you improve, so tell us: What would sustain you in doing this challenging work?”

Drawing by Sierra Walker, a first-grader at Carriage Drive Elementary School, San Juan USD, California

The arts projects illustrate the significant role that intrinsic rewards play in motivating the hard work of teaching and learning well. At Southwest High School in Minneapolis, for example, ninth-grade students take a humanities class where they use the arts to explore major themes in twentieth-century history. Teachers have collaborated with each other and with artists to develop assignments that require students to generate original texts or performances. The point is to convince young people that they are capable of creating messages and offering thoughtful critiques.

As his final project in a study of the period between 1900 and 1950, one student showed a video in which images of noisy crowds alternated with the cold silence of blank, black screens.

*Teacher:*

What do you want the video to tell us?

*Student/creator:*

That it's a century of mass violence and destruction.

*Teacher (to other members of the class):*

You're the viewers. Did it read that way?

*Student 1:*

I get big populations and their disappearance.

*Student 2:*

I get that lots of people want a voice but are silenced.

*Student 3:*

What's about the blank screens? Why black, not white?

*Student/creator:*

People are too used to seeing, like, Vietnam or Nazi Germany. I wanted to make someone think more, not just, like, recognize... not just declared war but, like, all kinds of destruction.

The opportunity to express original ideas in original formats energizes these students. Thinking about this conversation later in the day, the teacher reflects on how student motivation stimulates her own will and investment.

The rewards for teaching high school don't always pile up in front of you at the end of any given school day. So when a student defends

his own work in a critique, like this morning, I take something back from it. I'm up for more. I'm coming back tomorrow.

In a later conversation, the students explain why they will stay in this humanities course as tenth graders and why they take this work so seriously that they are willing to insist on their images and points of view.

*Student/creator:*

I am staying because I get to make things. I mean, my own things, like the video.

*Student 1:*

The same's for me.

*Student 2:*

Same. In here we aren't just talking about what's already been done and written about, we're making new things. We're not reading other people's stuff; it's like we're authors.

Nothing runs on empty. Extrinsic rewards – salary raises, extra compensation, promotions – are important, and every skilled teacher deserves them. But no school reform budges until there is an infrastructure of motivation and intrinsic rewards: reliable sources of pride and satisfaction that allow *both* students and teachers to experience themselves as inherently capable.

### **Demand and Support: Balancing Opportunity and Accountability**

One danger of school reform is that much is asked, but little is given. In other words, teachers are held accountable for results without the corresponding opportunity to learn how to meet different and higher standards. Without such support, teachers have little choice but to respond with compliance rather than understanding. If whole-school reform depends on deep, rather than superficial, changes in educational practice, there has to be a full match between opportunity to learn and accountability – for teachers as much as for students.

One winter night – despite rain and crowded streets and subways – the ground floor of the Studio Museum in Harlem is full of public school teachers, spanning kindergarten through high school, who work with the Center for Arts Education. They come

from schools throughout New York City that have adopted the arts as a major strategy for school improvement. But few of these teachers have any substantial background in the arts. Even fewer have had the opportunity to learn how to use the arts to develop habits crucial to children meeting high standards: effort, persistence, and the will to do excellent work.

To help them become accountable in this new way of teaching, the Center created a series of six seminars with collaborating classroom teachers and teaching artists that focus on “looking at student work.” As this session begins, teachers pull out their students’ most recent paintings and drawings from oversized portfolios and spread them out on tables. An elementary school teacher explains an assignment in which she and the artist at her school helped children to make close observational drawings of cityscapes around the school. She talks about how they taught the sketching process and how students then made larger, more interpretive paintings that captured the “feel” of particular places. She pulls out an 18” x 24” tempera painting of the river, all grays and blues. Surrounding teachers study the work, pointing out how much of the riverside the child has captured – the banks, the stormy sky, and what might be a swathe of dark water.

*Teacher 1:*

He’s painted a lot of movement into the sky and the river.

*Teacher 2:*

Do you think he was really doing all that? He’s in, what, third grade? Maybe it’s more of an accident and we read into it.

*Presenting teacher:*

I don’t think so. *[She takes out an earlier painting by the same child.]* This was only a month ago. You can see how the water was just a slab of blue here. Now he’s painting the same things but very differently. So, yeah, I think he’s really going after the river and the night moving.



“It’s foggy. There’s waterfalls and trees.  
I like the lines because they are wavy and furry.”

Drawing and text by Caroline Allen, a first-grader at Carriage Drive Elementary School, San Juan USD, California

The teachers discuss how the project has kept their children sketching and painting the same scenes for several months, becoming more observant and expressive. They go on to think aloud about how they can motivate that kind of effort and persistence when they teach mathematics or social studies. As the session winds up in a shuffle of papers and raincoats, someone says, “It’s good, this one big mind.”

Left alone, the young artists’ sketching and painting sessions could simply have been a chance to go outside to work, having little to no effect on students’ or teachers’ learning. Instead, the seminars provided opportunities for teachers to reflect on the role of effort and persistence in meeting standards. By creating opportunities to develop the tools for becoming accountable, the Center’s work helped balance demands with supports.

### **Insist on Candor: A Key to Quality**

Too often school reform suffers because teachers fail to challenge instructional practices that are unacceptable or work that is not up to standards. Challenging is not a part of school culture, and there is little time to develop the practice. As a result, little changes.

In Columbus, Ohio, a team of fifth-grade teachers at the Windermere Elementary School reject this conspiracy of silence. They honestly describe the quality of their efforts as “uneven” at the outset. In some cases, the art work was ho-hum; in other cases, the academic learning was weak. In still others, it was not clear how the academic and artistic content were mutually enhancing. The question of quality was everywhere.

The Windermere team worked together to develop a unit on the Civil War for a required American history course. As part of their involvement in the TETAC project, they incorporated visual, literary, and theater arts into the unit of study. Using drama



*Study of Melissa*, Diana Sootes,  
Edward R. Murrow High School, Brooklyn

techniques, they assigned historical roles to each student: a corporal on the Confederate side, a wife left at home on a plantation, an escaped slave, a boy-soldier in the Union ranks, etc. The students were totally engaged, answering to morning attendance with their adopted names, wearing bits of costume, and writing in the first person as their characters.

Despite this enthusiasm, the team’s university mentor kept asking hard questions. As one of the teachers described it:

There was a big section on the Underground Railway in which the kids made quilts. Our mentor wasn’t convinced that there was any real connection between the art and the history. She spent time in the classroom talking to kids and brought the results back to us. Kids could name the pattern and say why they liked it. They could explain that quilts were used as signals to guide escaping slaves on their way to Canada. But she kept asking, “How do you know they are doing more than cutting and coloring? What’s the evidence?” It was not an easy message to hear, especially since the kids were excited and the classroom looked great with quilts and battle flags hung everywhere.

Another teacher recalled:

When those questions came, I thought, “Wait, we did a lot. These are only ten-year-olds. This is not some university course. We taught kids about the times. We got them to think from different perspectives. You try it!”

But when we took time that summer to plan, we looked at kids’ work. They had a lot of information, but it wasn’t really history. More like those flimsy historical novels for young adolescents. This forced us to ask, “Why are we making quilts and battle flags?” “What are they supposed to get out of the camp songs?”

Throughout the revision process, the principal supported their continued work with modest funds but strong interest. By the third round of revisions, the teachers had developed a commitment to rethinking their work; the results were at last visible in student work: any of their fifth graders could articulate

important historical issues in studying the Civil War, as in these excerpts from two student interviews:

People in the Underground Railway used quilts to give signals to slaves who were escaping north. Even poor people had quilts, and they washed and put them out to dry. So it wasn't suspicious to see a quilt on a bush or a porch. The patterns were the everyday ones, like "Flying Geese," but people gave them new meanings, like making the points in the pattern show the way.

What you have to understand is this: from my point of view as an escaped slave, my life was even harder during the war. Before the war, if I escaped, I knew where the boundaries were, I knew where safe houses might be and what kinds of signals to expect along the way. You know, what gates, what kinds of quilts hanging over the front rail. But the war tore apart that system. If I was trying to escape from Georgia in 1860, I would have had information passed to me. But in 1863, the boundary was between Union and Confederate forces and it could be different day to day.

As a result of teachers and mentors working out a shared system of internal accountability, quality was achieved. The art teacher, the English teachers, and the social studies teachers created explicit standards of quality that defined not only student work, but also what they expected of each other.

The Windermere teachers are unusual in their candid appraisals of the quality of their teaching and their students' learning. They are also unusual in their ability to separate cosmetic change from improvement in teaching and learning. They distinguish technical effects – the use of new materials like quilts or students answering to their character's name – from substantial improvement. They are clear that crowd-pleasing effects – such as Civil War re-enactments – can signal increased engagement without increased understanding.

### **Build Reciprocity: Everybody Gains**

Throughout the last several decades, as arts programs were cut, many schools have scrambled to ensure that their children had at least some arts experiences. What emerged was often a simple purchaser-vendor



relationship. Schools bought trips to the ballet or the museum or arranged for short on-site residencies and for arts organizations to deliver the services.

The Challenge Arts projects rejected this fee-for-service relationship. They recognized that the work of returning the arts to public education requires a network of *reciprocal relationships* in which both sides “push” and both sides gain. That reciprocity, where fulfilled, created a kind of “engine” that kept the work going.

One such mutual partnership emerged between the Arts for Academic Achievement project, the Minneapolis schools, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and an already established program, Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS).<sup>1</sup> The program was designed to help young viewers learn to observe closely and to develop rich interpretations of a particular work through discussion. This strategy has proven useful

1. The VTS curriculum, developed by Abigail Housen, Philip Yenawine, and Amelia Arenas, introduces works of art from the Museum of Modern Art collection into classroom practice in grades 4–6.





even with very young children and became especially important in classrooms where there were many recently arrived immigrant children who were English-language learners. As one teacher explained:

Over half of my class is learning English. A lot of the materials I have for them are about acquiring words and very simple sentences. Obviously, that's a place to begin, but where are they going to get the language for *ideas*? That is where VTS comes in. I project a huge image, a painting or a photograph big enough for them to walk into. It's very concrete. A kid can make a contribution by walking up to the image and pointing out a detail no one else has noticed. Right away, they are players.

We do it as a whole class, and I move around the image, collecting their observations so we can build up an understanding of what is going on. The kids add and add and add. We can say much more than they could write. They leave the "cat, mat, hat" world way, way behind.

Children and their special docents used the same strategies when they went to visit the museum. They stayed talking and pointing for long periods in front of works. They could be heard picking out details and making surprising connections. For the first time, teachers said that the visit was too short.

Docents reported the children's concentration and intensity to other museum staff who were trying to move away from the traditional docent tour featuring artist names, dates, and materials. The depth and freshness of student discussions made it clear that VTS might be the solution they were searching for. Now, all new docents are trained using VTS, and all tours are based on this kind of collaborative noticing. As a result, museum staff see their work with schools less as "community outreach" and more as a crucible for thinking about arts education in the broadest sense.

# Reflection:

## The Ethics of School Reform

Many teachers, principals, and central office personnel report working ten-hour days, waking up to new priorities, having funding cut off on initiatives that were just getting established, and seeing themselves and their work described in the morning paper in ways they barely recognize. They are willing to work hard – but too often the return is small, almost grudging. What they want – and deserve – is school reform run by a different set of rules, one that respects and values professionals who work in schools.

The public debate about improving education is increasingly about enhancing the extrinsic rewards for educators, ranging from signing bonuses for mid-career entrants to pay for performance. But most educators joined the profession because they had a passion for music, they wanted to make a difference, they wanted to give something back, they wanted to sustain their communities. They're motivated more by a parent calling for advice or a graduate returning to talk than by a certificate at the annual awards dinner.

The Challenge Arts projects carry this message: School reform is first and foremost a set of mutual human commitments; reform efforts cannot succeed on mandates or extrinsic rewards alone. To be sustainable and significant, school improvement requires acknowledgment, engagement, and collaboration. These are not frills; they are what fuel commitment and hard work.

The experiences of the three Arts projects sketch out a rough ethics for sustained school improvement:

- A view of human beings as authors, as inherently capable;
- Sources of intrinsic reward built with the same attention that is poured into sanctions;
- Candor among stable groups of educators – teachers, mentors, coaches, principals – who are willing to critique their work, even though it already “looks and smells successful”;
- Demands balanced with supports: everyone engaged in whole-school change needs a balance of opportunity and accountability;
- A mutual compact with community partners to collaborate at more than a cosmetic level so that each partner becomes a better educator.

If a school or district does not know how – or is indifferent – to living by such ethically based principles, it is unlikely to command the necessary hard work from students, teachers, or families that whole-school reform requires. Building an infrastructure of frank and decent human relations is perhaps the essential first step toward lasting educational improvement.





## Lesson 2:

### MAKE EXCELLENCE EQUITABLE

SOME OF THE MORE hopeful leaders in the current round of standards-based reform predicted that the changes under way in schools could, for the first time, create both equity and excellence. These leaders suggested that holding high expectations for all children and providing them the means of reaching those expectations could enable children from all backgrounds to excel.

While that hoped-for state has not yet been reached, the Challenge Arts projects represent models for how to move toward it. Part of the genius of the arts as a school improvement strategy is that the arts offer a way for making excellence available, creating equity, and addressing the false tension between those two goals.

The equity and excellence of the arts is beautifully captured in a famous photograph. In August of 1958, a naïve young photographer named Art Kane called up every great jazz musician in Harlem and told him or her to show up on a certain day at a certain address so that he could shoot the opening image for an *Esquire* article on jazz. Amazingly, fifty-seven musicians showed up. The panorama of faces, black and white, rises in tiers on the steps of an old brownstone, everyone just standing where they happened to end up.

This now-famous photograph hints at a role for arts education in school reform that is rarely claimed. The arts often create an in-school ecology where students of different ethnicities come together but do not replicate the achievement gaps that are practically universal in schools.

In their five-year challenge, arts educators and their partners showed what it takes to achieve both equity and excellence: creating heterogeneous settings, teaching excellence, and providing students with many ways of showing what they know and can accomplish.

#### **Value Heterogeneity: Diverse Communities of Learners**

Traditionally, schools have tended to separate out students who are not succeeding – who tend to be disproportionately poor children and children of color – and give them watered-down instruction so that they can reach “at least” some level of proficiency. But the result of this practice is that such students end up farther and farther behind their peers and never catch up.

Arts education frequently offers a different approach: all students are given the same chance to succeed. And, the results show, the students seize these opportunities and demonstrate that achievement is not inexorably tied to income or ethnicity.

Southwest High School in Minneapolis is two schools in one: a comprehensive high school serving neighborhood students and an International Baccalaureate (IB) Program that attracts students from across the city and neighboring suburbs. The comprehensive high school serves high numbers of Latino, Black, and Asian students. The Baccalaureate program serves a population that is predominantly white with a number of Asians and only a handful of Black and Latino students. For many years, the two schools

merely coexisted; but through the Arts for Academic Achievement program, the school got funding to create a heterogeneous humanities class for all ninth-grade students. At tenth grade, students can elect to stay in the heterogeneous class or move into other sections of humanities.

The heterogeneous tenth-grade humanities classes are among the most integrated in the school, bringing together students whose academic careers have already begun to diverge widely. Two juniors – one who moved on to the International Baccalaureate program, the other who entered the comprehensive high school – talk about the effect of their two years in the open-enrollment humanities class:

*Student 1:*

The humanities class is the major place in the school where white and nonwhite students mix. I know for me it was.

*Student 2:*

It's one of the reasons I left the IB program. There, it is all work, work, work and very competitive. You're out for yourself, so you don't work with anyone ever. And I never saw my friends from humanities. There were only white students, and a few Asians.

*Student 1:*

That class gave me friends all over the school. People I still hang out with. I know that a lot of my friends, like, got their start there. Like my friend Lisa. She did video projects for humanities and then she started a Latino film club. Now she's the president of the Latino student association.

*Student 2:*

It's one place where you see Latino and Black kids being leaders. Or being the best at something. If I hadn't been in that class, I would have left here without ever seeing that.

There is preliminary evidence<sup>2</sup> that students who take elective arts courses in high school do better

than their peers, regardless of their social or economic background, and that these effects are even more pronounced for poor and minority students. Frequently, arts educators use such findings to argue that learning from the arts transfers to other domains, or that the arts furnish special kinds of critical or creative thinking. But there are other plausible explanations.

For instance, there is the “great day in Harlem” possibility: the arts can provide a rare and productive ecology where ethnicity is not the presumed or relentless predictor of school success. The students at Southwest High were quite clear: the arts provided one of the few such locations in their entire middle and high school education. In theater class, in chorus, in the graphics studio, students of color were expected to excel at the same levels as their classmates.

### **Bother to Teach Excellence: Explicit and Attainable Quality**

In many arts classes, students are not allowed to pass in work and get a D. Instead, they have to replay the scene, rethink the graphic design problem, or rehearse their ensemble work outside of class and return with a respectable performance. Such an insistence on excellence permeates art instruction.

Consider another Minneapolis high school painting class, where the students are learning to blend colors seamlessly, filling a circle with color that gradually turns from black to burgundy so that a sphere seems to loom up from the two-dimensional surface. Everyone in the studio bends over minute gradations of white, burgundy, and black. As she looks over the shoulders of intent students, the teacher pushes toward perfection:

This takes practice, you are probably going to have to do several before you get one that you like. . . . The darkest is the hardest, but you'll get it. . . . I'm saying that black has a place here; you've got to get down to the darkest dark.

Curious about what is turning out to be so hard, she takes out a brush, works with the same paint the students are using, and then shares her discovery:

I figured out that some of this pigment is thin, so you can get an even better blend if you do it over a second time, even though that means doing the whole thing over again.

2. See, for example, J. Catterall, J. Iwanaga and R. Chapleau. (1999.) “Involvement in the Arts and Human Development.” In Edward B. Fiske (Ed.), *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*, pp. 1–18. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership.



She wants her students to master this blending of water, paint, and paper – not so they can go on to the next step, but so they will always have this kind of command. She stops by two students who have rushed or taken the exercise lightly. Without reprimand, she begins at the foundation, demonstrating how to wash a brush so that each color choice goes on pure.

Dip it in the water. Not once. Several times. Until the water runs clear. There...No, try one more time.

A little later in the class, she observes that a number of students are treating the exercise as coloring-in rather than as creating a careful illusion. Raising her voice slightly, but never naming names, she says:

Some of you are having difficulty with the shading. You want someone to be amazed to see a sphere rising out of your work. To do that you can't just color the circle in. You have the red become the black gradually. I want to see each one of you do it.

Finding a student who is closing in on mastery, she speaks to him so the entire studio can hear and learn.

You are almost there, that last stroke was a really good one. You got your second layer on, so it's really going to take color well. You are probably never going to be in total control – you can go in and out of it, that's how you know it's a matter of control.

A lot of art is like that; pastels will only take just so much color over them. Clay will only go so high before it collapses. So you have got to really know your materials. I make mistakes all the time, so I redo it. You can't have a decent project if you don't have a handle on these basics.

So saying, she upends the conventional notion of the “basics.” This sphere is not an entry-level exercise, after which students can move on to “real” painting. It is a chance to contract a life-long habit of attention to each not-at-all-small thing. This is not unique to the visual arts. It is also a regular part of rehearsing for a concert or a dance recital. Good studio classes, rehearsals, and critiques can be models for insistence on excellence.

### **I Am From**

I am from many a times a struggle for liberty  
at the brink of each day to find my identity

I am of reason and rhyme a significant soul  
with the knowledge of my history and the truth I sought to know

I am a beautiful spirit gifted and behold with the essence  
of my blackness that my grandmothers bestowed

—Shalondra O'Neal  
Minneapolis high school student



ine primary and secondary texts as part of answering an open-ended question. This year's practice exam included photographs and drawings. Students were to examine images depicting the life of the Iroquois people and then write about the culture and beliefs of the Iroquois. The instructions asked students to discuss, among other things: the Peace Maker's values and the Tree of Great Peace; the Hiawatha Belt and wampum as a means of trade; and the long houses as a daily example of Iroquois values.

One of the practice essays, written by a recently immigrated Arabic-speaking student, is pinned to the bulletin board. His current level of English is a small container for the ideas he has. When asked to talk aloud about his essay, he struggles. Asked what would help him to talk through his ideas, the boy goes right to the photograph of the wampum belt. He explains:

It's good to have the pictures. You can see the unique about this people here [*he points to the photo*]. If it used words, it would be, "It is made out of beads. It was very long." Here you can see how it is and know it is unique. If another tribe sees it, they will think these are smart people,

they can make such things. It is better to trade with them. Not fight them for food and land.

This image-based learning aligns tightly with the kinds of competencies English-language learners (and all other students) need to meet the standards on the state assessment. The classroom teacher speaks about the important coherence between the boy's architecture work and the demands of the social studies exam:

He knows how to look. If he has something to look at, it informs his writing. He doesn't get lost. He can keep his writing on track. You see what kinds of ideas the pictures help him to think about. It's the same for my other English learners; they have so much to say and need supports to put it into words. The pictures make all the difference.

This teacher and her colleagues at P.S. 20 value the arts for the way in which they level the playing field. The architecture project is invaluable because it provides what she can find nowhere else: high-demand curriculum for her students whose English is a trickle, while their ideas are a torrent.

## Reflection: *More Excellence than Imagined*

*There is a troubling conviction in education that if excellence abounds, if many, diverse children exhibit mastery, it must be counterfeit. Partly this is rooted in our long history with the bell curve. Partly this is rooted in persistent racism and classism. Whatever its origins, this belief has led us to hoard excellence in schools, even while we describe public education as a common good.*

*The Challenge Arts projects have made a substantial contribution in demonstrating that excellence can be widely shared without being diminished. The foregoing examples show that educators can*

- *create courses that can't be categorized as "comprehensive" or "honors" and which draw from all segments of the student body;*

- *challenge remediation by developing a repertoire of strategies that give them many ways to teach demanding content without lowering their expectations or shaming anyone who comes to that excellence slowly;*
- *offer the supports that allow students to demonstrate what they know; classrooms and schools are for everyone's learning, not for the survival of the fittest;*
- *teach excellence.*

*As one teacher-educator observed, "Equity without excellence is the arithmetic of mediocrity. But excellence without equity – that's injustice."*





## Lesson 3:

### RETHINK ACCOUNTABILITY

**B**ECAUSE THEIR PROGRAMS have frequently been vulnerable, arts educators have a long history of having to provide evidence that their programs are effective. Some of these efforts have translated into measures such as the number of children playing instruments or attending concerts. Other efforts have yielded interesting but still exploratory findings that the arts boost academic achievement or students' engagement with school.

But, currently, the demand for accountability has escalated. The pressing question is no longer, What have you provided to whom? or What do you think might be happening for students? but What are the measurable results for key participants such as students, classroom teachers, and building principals? Working in the context of whole-school reform, arts educators faced up to the call for more rigorous accountability. At the same time, they offered schools enriched approaches to looking for evidence.

In practice, this meant three shifts in the way that the Challenge Arts projects collected, analyzed, and used data on the effects of their programs. The first shift entailed thinking through how initial findings could inform school- and district-level practice. The second involved using multiple measures for collecting and disseminating a diverse set of data on the effectiveness of their programs. The third required examining the effects of the programs on multiple actors, not just on students.

Detail from one of eight large frescoes created by students in the Fresco Project at Ramsey Fine Arts Magnet School (K–8), Minneapolis Public Schools

#### **Use Data to Shape Instruction: Evidence-Based Practices**

The Challenge Arts projects realized that data is more than the results that appear at the completion of a project. Initial classroom-based findings on effective practices need to be examined carefully to see just how widespread and reliable the effects are. Once they have strong evidence, teachers, principals, and district personnel can analyze and use information from promising arts practices to leverage widespread change in district-level practices and priorities.

Clearly, one of the enormous challenges for arts education programs is to build a body of reliable findings that will convince skeptics that the arts make a valuable contribution to any child's education. To meet this challenge, arts programs need to develop and share information about what works, where "working" is not just running smoothly but producing important results for students, teachers, and schools.

Consider, for example, one of the recurring findings from projects integrating the arts into education: theater techniques – such as speaking in role, acting out a narrative, or even concert-style dramatic readings – appear to boost or enliven students' literacy achievement.<sup>3</sup> Classroom observations and samples of student work from all three of the Annenberg Challenge Arts projects appear to confirm this finding. (For instance, see the discussion of the Civil

3. See Shirley Brice Heath with Adelma Roach, "Imaginative Actuality: Learning in the Arts during the Nonschool Hours," pp. 19–34; and James Catterall et al., "Involvement in the Arts and Human Development," pp. 1–18. In Edward B. Fiske (Ed.), *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership.

War curriculum on pages 18–19 and the impact of the ninth-grade humanities class on pages 23–24.)

This finding offers promising possibilities for addressing a major national issue: adolescent literacy. Over two thirds of American adolescents read at or below the basic level, meaning they can extract literal information from texts but cannot infer, analyze, or critique what they read. The same is true for writing: more than two thirds of U.S. students can write basic narratives or informational paragraphs but cannot draft longer texts that develop ideas or formulate powerful arguments. Thus, the question arises: If dramatic techniques reliably bring life to texts and engage students who are struggling to become proficient readers and writers, shouldn't these techniques become a regular part of what a district offers its students?

While evidence from individual classrooms is enticing, it is just the beginning. In order to argue for the regular use of drama in the classroom, teachers, artists, and the organizations that support them need to push beyond their early and small-scale findings.

Imagine that a district wants to build on the findings of the Annenberg Arts projects and incorporate theater techniques into its literacy curriculum for middle and high school students, particularly those who are discouraged by past failures or current difficulties. What questions should artists, teachers, and district personnel be asking? What steps might

they take in developing theater residencies into a program for supporting literacy development in young adolescents?

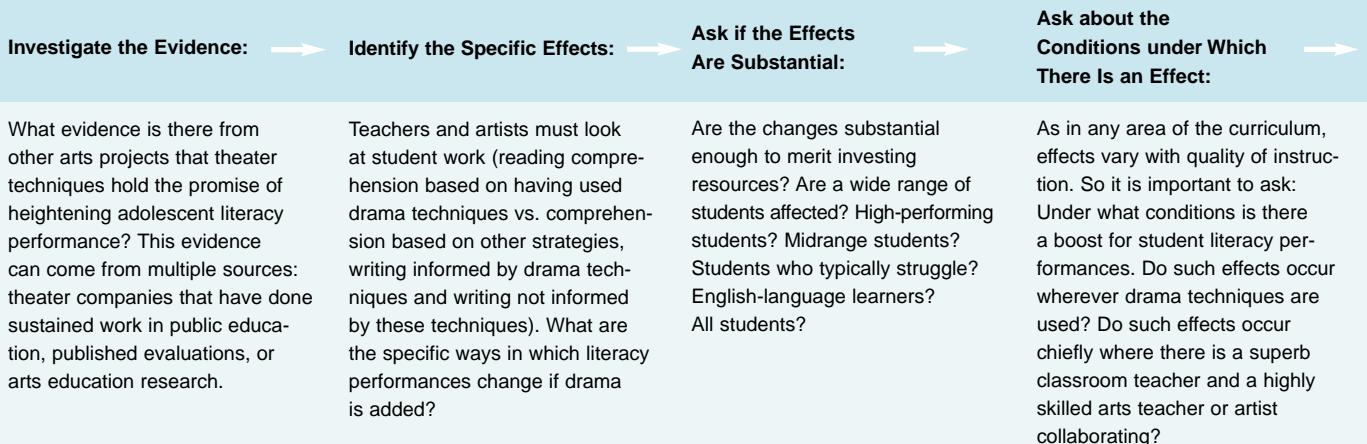
The sidebar below outlines such a process for gathering and using data from arts education projects. While complex, this process suggests how artists, teachers, and principals with the will to persevere might build their case for making the arts a more lasting part of educational opportunities for all children.

### **Examine Multiple Forms of Evidence: Test Data and Beyond**

In addition to classroom teachers, Challenge Arts projects participants and evaluators have used a wide range of approaches to collecting evidence for the effects of enhanced arts education in the schools. Their goal was to hold themselves accountable for results, but to use an *array* of evidence about the effectiveness of the projects. This range of approaches suggests that substantial and responsible data can be gathered in varied and thoughtful ways.

*Thoughtful use of standardized-test data:* The evaluators of the Arts for Academic Achievement project used standardized-test data to look at the various effects that integrative arts may have on different populations of children. Looking beyond the usual socio-economic categorizations of students allowed them

#### Initial Findings



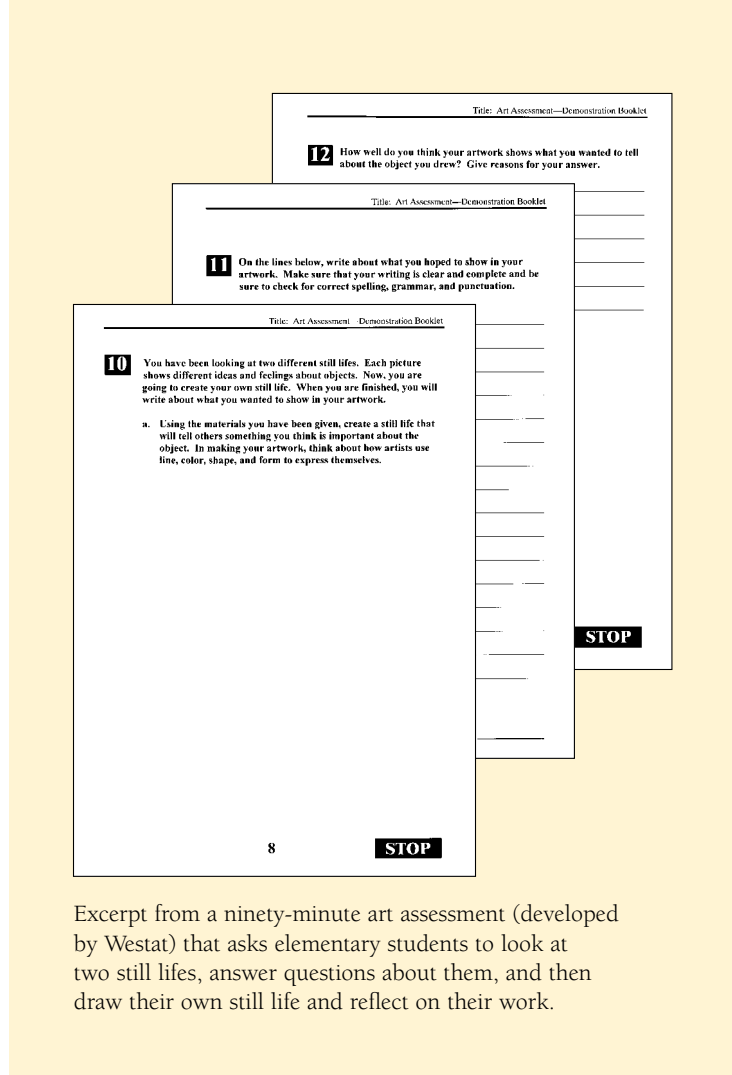


to track the effects of arts programming on students who have never had access to the arts and children from communities or families where the arts are a highly valued aspect of adult competence.

*Measures of process:* The evaluators for the Center for Arts Education argue that qualitative data, particularly those that capture the subtle processes of teaching and learning in the arts, help to explain why and how certain outcomes may be generated. For instance, in a playwriting class, do students:

- use the techniques they have been taught (e.g., do they stand up and improvise in order to figure out new lines)?
- revise lines once they have seen them performed?
- offer to be the audience for other groups of young actors?
- borrow and build on ideas they observe in others' performances?
- use language or devices they have read in published plays?
- spend their own free time rehearsing?

*Measures of performance in the domain:* TETAC researchers set out to measure the effects of visual arts instruction on students' achievement in that artistic



Excerpt from a ninety-minute art assessment (developed by Westat) that asks elementary students to look at two still lifes, answer questions about them, and then draw their own still life and reflect on their work.

Evidence-Based Practices

**Investigate if the Effects Are Lasting:**

A district wants to invest in approaches that affect students' literacy broadly. Thus, it is important to ask: Were there effects only when drama techniques were directly applied? Did engaging in dramatic approaches change the students' approach to reading and writing more broadly? In other words, did the program generalize? How long did the effects last? For as long as there was a theater-based intervention? What evidence was there that students were reading and writing differently three months after their engagement with drama? Six months? A year?

**Estimate the Costs of Securing the Effects:**

School districts are often under financial pressure. Thus, it is very important to model the costs and feasibility of using drama techniques. How many hours and what level of teacher and artist expertise did it take to produce robust effects? To produce moderate effects?

**Pilot the Program:**

If teachers and artists address these issues and arrive at promising answers, the district could develop a pilot program in dramatic literacy to be tried in several middle and/or high schools. It is important that the pilot involve teachers and classrooms that are typical of the settings in which the dramatic literacy project would be used.

**Make a Decision:**

Looking at the results of the pilot program, teachers, artists, principals, and central office personnel have to make a decision about how forcefully they want to endorse theater techniques as a vital strategy in literacy learning. Are the effects substantial enough in a range of classrooms that every English and history teacher should be trained to use them? Is this a technique that should be used in ninth grades to help students understand what constitutes a thorough understanding of a text? Or, are drama techniques simply one of the types of arts-in-education programs that the district should endorse as educationally sound?

domain. They built on and expanded the work done for the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress in the visual arts, developing multiple-choice and constructed-response items designed to examine students' knowledge of the visual arts as well as their ability to produce and reflect on their own art works.

### **Discover Everyone Who Is Affected: Networks of Impact**

Typically, arts educators have sought to demonstrate the effects of their programs on students alone. But the effort to enlarge and enhance the role of arts education in the public schools potentially has consequences for multiple participants. As the Challenge projects have found, adding arts education to a school's curriculum is much like adding a drop of dye to a glass of water. Across time, the effects spread. In this way, the projects can invite judgments about the quality of the programs that are based not only on student results, but also on the effects on teachers, principals, families, cultural partners, schools, and the education system itself.

For example, researchers at the University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI), who followed the work of Arts for Academic Achievement (AAA), observed the effects of arts integration on classroom teachers. They found that the practices of classroom teachers changed in two significant areas: teachers' conceptions of how learning takes place within their classrooms, and the kinds of instructional choices that teachers made in their daily practice. Linnette Werner reports that teachers found themselves

- thinking differently about the classroom;
- making room for integration despite some barriers;

4. For more information, see the CAREI homepage: <http://education.umn.edu/CAREI/> The quote is taken from the AAA section of CAREI's section on Evaluation Projects. See also Linnette Werner and Carol J. Freeman. (April 2001). "Arts Integration: A Vehicle for Changing Teacher Practice, Executive Summary."
5. A. R. Anderson and D. Ingram (2002). "Arts for Academic Achievement: Results from the 2000–2001 Teacher Survey." University of Minnesota, College of Education and Human Development, Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement.
6. Charles T. Kerchner, "Looking the Gift Horses in the Mouth," *Education Week*, April 18, 2001.

- creating child-centered vs. adult-centered classrooms;
- positively changing classroom climate;
- rethinking what is displayed or emphasized within the classroom and beyond;
- using more and varied resources to teach.

In addition, teachers significantly changed the way they approached classroom instruction. Teachers who were deeply involved with the project reported they were more likely to

- take risks;
- make more connections to the "core" curriculum;
- build teaching skills beyond the teacher's "bag of tricks";
- re-energize their approach to and thinking about teaching.<sup>4</sup>

Even in their third year of involvement with AAA – long after the novelty of a new initiative has worn off, teachers' survey data shows that over half of the teachers report that integrating the arts into their classroom instruction had a "very positive" effect on

- their schools' interest in and support of the arts (67%);
- the engagement of their students (64%);
- the quality of the curriculum (54%);
- the effectiveness of their teaching (51%).<sup>5</sup>

The mutual partnerships between teachers and artists also shaped teachers' views of pedagogy and interactions in classrooms. Teachers watching videotapes of their students at work with artists report seeing their own teaching practices in a different light.

Watching the tapes, I realized something about discipline. When the kids were in tap class, the teacher never once raised her voice. More than that, she never once called out anyone by name. She had her back to the class because she was demonstrating for them. She could hear when someone was just shuffling through or trying and not getting it. Without ever turning around, she would say something like, "I can hear that someone is not getting it. Just stand behind someone

who is and follow them. You don't have to do the full step, just mark it out. Keep doing that until it gets in your feet." She wasn't letting anything slide, but no one was ever pulled out or ashamed. I listened to myself after that and realized how much I'm calling out kids' names all day.

In this network of mutual effects, influence is rarely a one-way proposition. By virtue of the sustained partnerships they formed with the schools, artists and other cultural partners had steady income and a sustained period of work that allowed them to develop practices that would never have been possible in the all-too-familiar scramble of making a month-to-month living from multiple and unconnected residencies. In some settings, individual cultural partners learned to collaborate with rather than ignore the presence of other cultural partners in the school; for example, students and teachers in an

opera program learned to work with visual artists to design sets and special effects.

Charles Kerchner, writing in *Education Week* about the evaluation of the Annenberg Challenge in Los Angeles, points out that the impact of a project is often broad, and that those who would make judgments about the quality of programs might do well to look beyond the immediate effects.

All of us evaluate grants as projects, looking to see if a specific planned intervention took place, and to gauge its effect on the performance of the target school district. But examining the Annenberg grants this way misses the underlying story. The question to ask of the Annenberg grants, or others aimed at system changing, is not what happened to the project or short-term performance but what kind of an educational reform infrastructure did the project leave behind?<sup>6</sup>

## Reflection: More and Better Evidence

*In the current climate, schools and school systems are under tremendous pressure to show that they are improving student achievement. Arts educators are not immune from these pressures; indeed, they may face even greater pressures because of the often-tenuous support for their programs. Yet, intrinsic evidence (e.g., that music programs lead to more knowledge about music, playing an instrument, or listening to music in free time) rarely captures the attention or resources that arts education programs require. As a result, many arts educators have sought clear instrumental evidence, arguing that the arts matter because they are a means to some other publicly valued end, such as enhanced academic performance or more constructive social behaviors like school engagement.*

*While there is recurring evidence that arts education may have these effects, there are two major issues.*

- *As recent critics have pointed out, the findings and implications underlying these claims are questionable until we have corroborating studies that meet the standards for scientific inquiry.*

- *Equally troubling, the most readily available and widely used measures for registering the effects of arts education are standardized-test scores. But state and district tests were never designed – in format, content, or analysis – to measure the reflective or imaginative behaviors that the arts may foster.*

*This kind of mismatch between arts programs and large-scale testing used in traditional ways highlights the need for more appropriate and rigorous forms of evidence appropriate to the arts. Indeed, what is needed is a system of multiple measures appropriate to looking at the effects of arts education. These measures provide the information teachers need to gauge their own practice and make necessary adjustments; they also provide better information than otherwise would be available to policy makers and the public about the quality of the arts programs themselves and their effects on all participants. Such information can make arts programs truly accountable.*





## Lesson 4:

### BEGIN WITH

### PERMANENCE IN MIND

**T**O BE EFFECTIVE, school improvements have to endure. Flashes of hope are not enough. A teacher remembers when the Challenge Arts projects were first announced:

When the news of the Annenberg grant came, I have to admit I was bowled over by it – the sheer amount of years and dollars. We could afford to think, plan, pilot, and get to good practice. Also, the pure prestige of being an Annenberg site. We felt like we had been elected. I remember thinking, “We have got to do this well.”

Part of doing well is surviving. Particularly in education, special projects are vulnerable: funding comes to an end, educational beliefs change, school board elections reverse the political climate, and federal funding shifts direction. One classroom teacher captured the dilemma:

Too many educational programs come in with fanfare, ask people’s help, and then pull up stakes as soon as the data is in or the funding goes. It poisons the well. It breaks hearts.

All the Challenge Arts projects faced this issue. Individually and collectively, their responses suggest several key strategies for staying the course of school reform and ensuring the presence of the arts in public education: build infrastructure, enter the civic narrative, and create a sense of coherence.

#### **Build Infrastructure: Sustainable Systems**

None of the Challenge Arts projects had a guaranteed life past its initial grant. In each case, the projects had to think in terms of survival from day one. Survival, in this case, was not merely about enduring; it was about winning enough time to accomplish good work. To do that, the projects had to create an infrastructure that would enable them to stay in place for a long time.

#### **Engage Other Teachers**

One way to build an infrastructure was to engage teachers from other subject areas, a strategy TETAC employed with great success. The TETAC projects grew out of the work in “discipline-based arts education” at the J. Paul Getty Trust in California during the 1980s, when tremendous education cuts led to the loss of arts and music programs across the state. Discipline-based arts education programs included art history, criticism, and aesthetics, as well as studio work, and – importantly – the program stressed that classroom teachers could (given appropriate professional development opportunities) become skilled guides for students in exploring the visual arts.

Building on that foundation, TETAC staff and researchers continued to emphasize the role of classroom teachers and to build the argument that the arts should be an intrinsic part of every classroom teacher’s preparation and midcareer development. Teachers should be aware of the arts as teaching tools, as well as separate domains of learning. It is a strategy akin to “writing across the curriculum,”

where all teachers assume responsibility for supporting students' literacy development.

### **Create Ownership**

Another strategy for building an infrastructure is finding a way for schools and their partners to “own” arts education. In New York City, the Center for Arts Education has built a network of partnerships, each tuned to the needs of a specific site. These partnerships have become what staff call “contextual collaborations” – working relationships that facilitate individual school sites to build sustainable programs of arts education. Multiple arts and cultural groups collaborate on joint planning for the arts education programs designed for a specific school community.

In one instance, the artists and teachers involved in a sixth-grade opera project collaborate with visual artists working in the same site to think about designing scenery and costumes as the libretto is developed. Given joint planning time, the arts providers and school staff also develop a sense for the arts experiences that might underpin a sixth-grade opera: fiction-writing and illustration in primary school, musical instruments and composition in third and fourth grades, etc. The net result is a deliberate sequence of selected arts learning experiences for students. Thoughtful sequencing allows students to

develop increasing skills. Gradually, the opera (or art show or concert) becomes “our opera” – a distinctive hallmark of the school and a rite of passage for a class of children every year. In turn, the growing quality of student work fuels both teachers' and families' sense that their school is a place where the expectations are high and students develop to meet those standards.

### **Become Indispensable**

Yet another strategy for building an infrastructure is becoming an integral part of what schools should provide to all students. In Minneapolis, thanks to the staff of Arts for Academic Achievement, the superintendent's plan to distribute responsibility for school reform throughout the city named Southwest High School as the center for development of a districtwide arts policy. In addition, state requirements for high school graduation include examples of high-standards performances in Area 3, a combination of literature and the arts. Thus, the arts have become an integral part of high school education. At the same time, teachers, principals, and central office personnel have to acknowledge arts education as a vital part of preparing students for postsecondary education.

A similar situation exists for the California schools that are a part of TETAC. In California, the



state legislature passed a revision to the entrance requirements for the University of California system that now include courses in the arts. As a consequence, college-bound students who would once have ignored the arts because they “didn’t count,” now take music, visual arts, dance, or theater courses.

### **Become Part of the Civic Narrative: School in Community**

Arts educators recognize that the search for equitable learning opportunities does not stop at the school threshold. It takes an entire community to construct life-long corridors of opportunity.

The Center for Arts Education in New York City has populated the city with children’s works: the ground-floor gallery of a skyscraper in the South Street Seaport neighborhood, for example, makes student work visible to both visitors and passersby through huge plate-glass windows. This visibility is integral to the Center’s strategy to ensure that arts education secures a place in New York’s civic narrative – the story of the city as a crossroads of arts and culture.

In this spirit, the teachers at P. S. 20 on Manhattan’s Lower East Side work to ensure that their programs are seen as integral to the continuity and well-being of the neighborhood and the city. In the school’s foyer, documents and yellowing photos tell the story of how this school, once known as the Anna E. Silver School, educated hundreds of immigrant students, including famous performers like Irving Berlin. As a part of their architecture program, fourth- and fifth-graders regularly go out into the neighborhood looking at buildings and making sketches of historical façades. Teachers see these field trips as advertising the school to the surrounding neighborhood, thereby making it as indispensable a part of the landscape as the old storefronts and tenement houses. As one teacher remarked,

People always comment about how we show the children the neighborhood. The truth is, we take the children out to show the neighborhood the children.

These activities make the school and its children an intrinsic part of both the neighborhood and the citywide narratives. The fifth-graders and their sketchbooks become an emblem of the vigor of the city and revitalization of the neighborhood.

### **Create a Sense of Coherence: Internal and External Consistency**

One of the major accomplishments of the Challenge Arts projects has been to bring enough arts education to enough schools for enough years that it is possible to see what it takes to build a coherent system of arts learning opportunities from kindergarten through high school. This has helped enable the projects to put arts education on a par with other subject areas, thereby helping to ensure that the project’s goals were sustained.

In several of the communities where the Annenberg Arts projects took place, there had been a history of treating the arts as enrichment, rather than as a fundamental form of learning. The result was often a collection of activities that could only guarantee “exposure” to the arts. Such brief and patchwork programming often undercut sustained learning in or through the arts. At some grade levels, arts programs competed for the attention of schools and the interest of students. Other grade levels were barren. Moreover, from the point of view of children and families, particularly those without significant discretionary income, it was next to impossible to plot a continuous path of learning in the arts. A student might learn to play the recorder by third grade, then in fourth and fifth grades have only weekly vocal music. Or visual art. Or nothing.

### **Establish Internal Coherence**

The Challenge Arts projects set out to rectify that situation by creating developmental learning paths. This represented a shift in thinking for all teachers, not only those in the arts. Teachers traditionally respond to student work with a grade (or a brief comment), writing “85” or “B” or “Nice work.” Few have learned how to specify the next steps that could make a difference in achievement. Thus, a student regularly learns where he is but rarely learns where he could go next. (This practice is mirrored in district and state policy, where achievement is measured by comparing this year’s eighth grade to last year’s eighth grade, not in terms of the growth of individual students from seventh through ninth grade.) Teachers may work in grade-level teams, but rarely do they convene in vertical teams that bring teachers from different grades together. Entering such a

school culture, a new teacher learns that he teaches “fourth grade,” not the part of the curriculum that builds on the learning of third grade and lays the foundation for what can happen in fifth grade.

At the outset of the TETAC project, mentors and evaluators worked with classroom teachers to develop their own units of instruction. Each unit was to help children use the different lenses of art history, criticism, aesthetics, and creation in understanding how visual art works. As in many other curriculum reform projects, the initial results were not the polished units needed for good teaching and learning. The units also highlighted a much less discussed and equally chronic problem: the units did not add up to the kind of sequential curriculum that would enable students to deepen their understanding year after year. The units pointed out how rarely schools address the fundamental question of students’ development *over time*.

As the TETAC project evolved, staff and evaluators realized that teachers needed support in establishing a more coherent, or developmental, approach. The first of these tools was a common set of units of study built on a core set of ideas that deepened from kindergarten to sixth grade. With this as the basis, the principal and teachers at Carriage Drive Elementary School in the San Juan Unified School District in California created coherent developmental paths for learning in the visual arts across the grades. Working

as a vertical team, teachers in grades K through 6 made sure that their teaching built over time.

This approach means that the vocabulary, the art works that anchor each unit, the level of challenge, and the expected quality of student performance develop over time. Students have to *build* their understanding. This approach also means that teachers share a vision of what it looks like to grow better in a specific field; in this case, the visual arts. Using a common rubric for assessing student work, Carriage Drive teachers often discuss what a Level 2 or a Level 4 should mean at first versus fifth grade.

Without this shared vision, the claim that “all students can learn at high levels” turns into an empty refrain. Yet even in districts that have declared themselves to be standards-based, the framework informing daily practice (as well as policy) is based on ascertaining current levels of *achievement*. Without a shared sense for what *development* looks like, teachers and educational partners can provide activities but not direction. Substantial change in student learning requires knowledge of how to get there, day by day, year by year.

The principal at Carriage Drive Elementary School understands this point. She has used the collaboration with TETAC to begin a schoolwide conversation about continuous growth. Working with her teachers she has mapped out the expectations for children’s

Figure 1

**Excerpt from Carriage Drive Elementary School Matrix of K–6 Grade-level Curriculum**

Grade Level	Commercial Curriculum Art Express	Staff-developed Units: Title and Artists	Staff-developed Units: Enduring Ideas	Art Specialist Support Lessons for Grade-level Units
1	Unit 2 – <i>Inside Art</i> How is art reflected in the world around us? Unit 6 – <i>The World of Art</i> Where do we find art in our world?	<i>A Taste of Thiebaud</i> Wayne Thiebaud and Andy Warhol	Artists see ordinary things in very different ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creating repetitive pattern</li> <li>• warm and cool colors</li> <li>• moving colors/tempera paint</li> </ul>
2	Unit 3 – <i>Art about People</i> Artists tell stories through their artwork	<i>Feelings about Nature</i> Vincent Van Gogh	Man’s relationship with nature can be expressed in different ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• still-life painting</li> </ul>
3	Unit 2 Environment influences man Unit 4 Imagination transforms everyday objects into special “stuff”	<i>Every Aspect of Nature Is Man’s First Inspiration</i> Hokusai and John Stewart Curry	Man & nature: Man’s awareness of and experiences with the unpredictability of nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mono prints/ink</li> </ul>



visual arts learning grade by grade (see Figure 1). She sees vertical teaming, shared goals, and developmental planning as strategies for focusing on the sequence, effectiveness, and continuity of any and all of her academic programs.

### **Achieve External Coherence**

Coherence involves more than aligning a school's internal resources. Coherence is a set of signals that all systems are pulling toward the same goal. School reform efforts are often thrown off course by incoherent demands. For instance, any number of states and districts have standards calling for all students to have arts education, yet there are not sufficient funds for teachers and no requirements for student learning in the arts to be assessed. These kinds of conflicting messages drain off effort and belief.

Instead of shrugging and saying, "So it goes," the Challenge Arts projects worked toward aligned messages and an increasing coherence between classroom practice and the systems that affect it. One of the striking instances of this is the standards and assessment system in the Minneapolis Public Schools. At the state level, proponents of arts education supported combining the arts and literature into a single set of standards (Area 3; see Figure 2). Coupling the arts to an academic area that is unlikely to disappear was a very effective way to build a permanent infrastructure in support of arts education.

Figure 2

### **Minneapolis Public Schools HS304 Visual Arts**

#### **High School Content Standards Area 3: Literary and Arts Creation and Performance**

Students must complete the Literary and Arts Creation and Performance standard in an art form **other than** creative writing **and** must complete the Literature and Arts Analysis and Interpretation standard in literature. They may complete either or both standards in additional art forms as electives. The art forms include: visual arts, literary arts, media arts, dance, music, and theater.

#### **Literary and Arts Creation and Performance**

In dance, music, theater, visual arts, creative writing, or media arts, a student shall demonstrate understanding of the elements, techniques, and processes of the selected art form and how works of the art form are structured; and, in the art form, the student shall create or perform, or both, an original artistic presentation including a single complex work or multiple works that:

- a. demonstrates elements and skills of art form;
- b. demonstrates artistic decisions to communicate intent;
- c. demonstrates a sense of an artistic whole;
- d. demonstrates a consideration of audience; and
- e. uses multiple sources for critique and feedback.

## Reflection: *Flourishing, Not Just Enduring*

*The Challenge Arts projects have illustrated the difference between enduring and flourishing. For many years, arts education has lived perched on the edge of public education, prey to underfunding, budget cuts, part-time positions, and teachers who must haul their materials from place to place in shopping carts.*

*The Arts projects have provided a vision of the conditions under which arts teachers and artists can make a difference to the quality of public education. But flourish-*

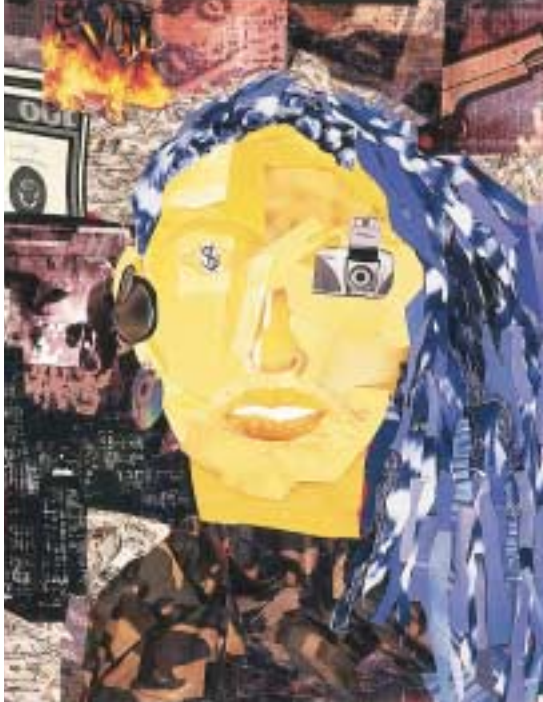
*ishing isn't free: it requires both accountability and planning to survive. There must be candid but enriched forms of evidence. That evidence must reflect networks of effects. There must be long-term planning for becoming a part of community life, for reinforcing broad educational goals, and the will to add to the growing coherence of school- and district-level improvement.*





*Conclusion:*

TWO NEW POSSIBILITIES



*Yellow*, Angela G. Lopez

### Self

I am yellow

my mother is Black

my father is Spanish

An unusual mix

It's like black eyed peas

on yellow rice

its not traditional

but it still tastes all right

my brother and sisters

complexions are darker than mine

When I was little

they described me as yellow

Yellow is unique to me

On the color wheel of my life

black & tan make yellow.

—Angela G. Lopez

High School of Fashion Industries, Manhattan

IN USING THE ARTS as a tool for whole-school reform, the Challenge Arts projects offered new insights about “the human heart” of school improvement, particularly the mutuality and candor necessary to making more than cosmetic improvements. They also highlighted the contribution arts education could make to dissolving the long-running tensions between excellence and equity. They suggested new and broader ways of being accountable and addressing the impact of change on many players. And they recognized the need to create and sustain coherent systems and lasting infrastructures to ensure lasting benefits for students.

But these lessons don't exhaust the consequences of these three projects. As the Challenge-funded programs sunset or evolve into new initiatives, they leave behind two major possibilities for the future of public education.

- The first possibility is for schools and communities to understand that their children's well-being includes becoming active participants in the cultures to which they belong.
- The second possibility is for us to begin to think in terms of creating a wider educational *system* where students' opportunities to learn multiply.

### INVEST IN CULTURAL WELL-BEING

A growing body of research on youth development shows that students want to be acknowledged by their communities, not as potential truants or hungry consumers but as capable, active, engaged individuals.<sup>7</sup> One high school student reflected on such an encounter.

I work nights, the seven-to-eleven shift at a cookie store. It's the kind of place where people come in; point to the macadamia chocolate chips; say, “Two of those”; and never look up. Especially not if the guy in the apron is sixteen and wearing a funny little white hat. One night, it was slow, so I was doing my homework, reading *The Great Gatsby* with a highlighter, you know, for English class. This man comes in, he points to the double

7. The concept of cultural well-being was developed through conversations with Libby Chiu, Executive Director, Urban Gateway, Chicago.



chocolate chips and says, "I'll take one." I put the book and the highlighter down on the counter. He looks at me, and says, "You reading that? I remember the first time I read it. High school, right?" He went on to talk about East and West Egg and good and evil. He almost walked off without his cookie.

Here may be an expanded argument on behalf of arts education. It is an argument that, just as there is physical health or academic success, there is an aspect of well-being that involves becoming an active member of a culture, someone who is able to:

- care for what has been inherited from earlier cultures and generations;
- examine, rather than reject out of hand, what is different or emerging that might enrich current cultural life;
- endorse the use of public resources (taxes, city land, education, etc.) to support a shared cultural life;
- understand the value of the immaterial: truth, craft, beauty, vision, or empathy;
- advocate for their own role in creating a shared, varied, and evolving cultural future.

Arts educators could make a substantial contribution to the lives of young people by insisting that cultural well-being must be an outcome for all students.

## BUILD LARGER LEARNING SYSTEMS

To achieve these kinds of bold goals, a community would have to realize that schools are not the only source of opportunities to learn: there are many venues and occasions for learning spread throughout the community. In addition, the community would have to grasp that school reform and welcoming students into the cultural life of a community are linked projects. Finally, a community would have to understand how much of educational opportunity consists of helping students and families "connect the dots" between in-school and out-of-school learning.

High-status children experience diverse and uninterrupted opportunities to learn. They get to spend a surprising segment of their free time in *building their own capacities*. They are constantly visible in public

spaces as *developing individuals* in whom others invest. The lives of children accorded lower status are dramatically different. Even as arts-based learning enters their school and they become involved, there is no system for ensuring that they get to pursue their own developing capacities. Their interest in trumpet or dance often ignites and then dies out when there is no way to continue. As older students, they experience many more duties (child- and elder-care, housework, shopping, and paying jobs to contribute to family income). They learn early about their *instrumental* usefulness, as caregivers or hourly workers, but they have dramatically fewer opportunities to see themselves, or to be seen, as *ends in themselves*.

But all children deserve investment. Part of that can come from school. But there is also a role for libraries, museums, community music schools, and so on. To equalize those opportunities, we need to think about creating a broader learning *system* that links all students to additional opportunities.

The three Challenge Arts projects have modeled what such an expanded educational system might look like. Each project engaged a range of cultural partners in making a substantial investment in *and around* public education. In some sites this system grew to include structured after-school activities, summer programs, or on-the-job apprenticeships. Practices also included informal supports for entering a series of cultural opportunities: a theater artist tells his class about a children's theater that is forming in their neighborhood; a writer talks with a student about an author he might like to read or convinces her to submit her work to a magazine. As a result of these projects, many more young people were in public spaces – galleries, theaters, libraries – settings where still other opportunities might arise. Moreover, children with varied cultural identities and heritages were visible in public spaces as readers, musicians, or photographers.

Thus, the Challenge Arts projects nominate both public school education and this kind of out-of-school curriculum as major tools for equalizing and enriching students' opportunity to learn. As Nobel laureate Toni Morrison once observed, we can judge the greatness of a culture by its capacity to share.

THE CHALLENGE ARTS PROJECTS

## Arts for Academic Achievement in Minneapolis: A Sustainable Effort

*The arts capture students' passions and catapult them into worlds they could not imagine or have access to otherwise. Teachers become completely dedicated to instruction in and through the arts. The partnerships with artists end the isolation teachers often feel, and open up their worlds as well.*

—Dr. Judy Hornbacher, Director, Arts for Academic Achievement

Arts for Academic Achievement (AAA) was a five-year partnership between the Minneapolis Public Schools and the Perpich Center for Arts Education designed to accelerate student achievement in and through the arts. The project was funded by a \$3.2-million grant from the Annenberg Foundation, matched two-for-one from public and private sources.

AAA developed in Minneapolis, a highly civic community. Among the Annenberg Challenge arts projects, AAA provided an illustration of what can happen when there is public, district, and state-level support for arts education. The school district had supported arts education even through periods of belt-tightening budget cuts and growing accountability for academic achievement. Thus, even at the inception of the project, Minneapolis schools typically had a visual arts and a music teacher serving each school building.

At the district level, the superintendent and the central office staff viewed arts education as an integral part of a solution to improving public education. Superintendent Carol Johnson publicly and strongly endorsed a growing role for the arts in the district, even going so far as to redirect a well-deserved personal raise to a fund for arts education. There was also state-level support for arts education. When Minnesota drafted its criteria for a high-standards diploma, the state stipulated that students must perform at high levels in a number of specified areas, including Area 3, which includes literature and the arts.

The existing infrastructure permitted AAA staff to focus from the outset on sustainability. Throughout the five years, AAA staff and the superintendent engaged in long-range planning about how to turn the AAA project into a permanent feature of the Minneapolis Public Schools. A key element was professional development with teachers, based on the argument that the most important

key to sustainability would be to turn classroom teachers into trained and tireless advocates for the arts.

Arts for Academic Achievement cosponsored an annual three-day summer "Urban Retreat for the Arts," where some 400 teachers and artists participated in sessions on effective teaching practices, opportunities to explore partnerships, and tours of public art, museums, and theaters. The project also cosponsored an annual conference for 200 artists, "Shape-shifting: The Magic of the Teaching Artist," and several smaller workshops for principals and administrators on the power of integrative arts education. Teachers regularly had the opportunity to attend cultural events as adult learners.

AAA has collaborated with researchers from the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, a major educational research and evaluation institute at the University of Minnesota. Their evaluation examined the effects of the program on teacher practices as well as students' academic achievement and community support. In addition, researchers demonstrated how *existing* measures of student perform-

ance can be used in new ways to understand the impact of the arts on students. Thus, the final study provided an important example of how districts and states could monitor several publicly valued effects of arts education without the burden of additional testing.

The project had an impact beyond the schools in the Annenberg group. Teachers from other schools regularly attended staff development opportunities. The Perpich Center, a state agency, funded sites in Greater Minnesota that wanted to initiate projects modeled after Arts for Academic Achievement. As a result of ties with the project, three local colleges began offering new courses in integrative arts education for their preservice teachers.

Research findings on the Arts for Academic Achievement program are available at [www.mpls.k12.mn.us/aaa](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/aaa).

## *The Center for Arts Education in New York City: The Coordination of Resources*

*The arts are not meant for the elite few; rather, every child in this city is entitled to choreograph a dance, sing an aria, or paint a watercolor.*

—Laurie Tisch Sussman, Board Chair, *The Center for Arts Education*

The New York City Annenberg Challenge for Arts Education – a \$12-million, two-for-one matching grant – supported the Center for Arts Education, an independent, nonprofit organization whose guiding purposes are to institutionalize arts instruction as part of the core curriculum in the city’s school system and to use the arts as a catalyst for whole-school change.

The Center’s work takes place in a city rich with cultural resources: orchestras, theaters, galleries, museums. As the Center’s executive director, Hollis Headrick, puts it, “First we asked what makes a good education, then we asked how our city – this mother lode of culture in which we sit – can help us get there.”

But amidst these remarkable resources, the public commitment to arts education had dwindled. By the early 1990s, under drastic budget pressures and growing indifference to arts education, that support had withered. Particularly in poor schools, arts education was reduced to occasional short programs purchased from individual artists and arts organizations.

To reclaim the city’s tradition of supporting arts education, the Center worked in a unique public/private partnership with the New York City Department of Education, the Department of Cultural Affairs, and the United Federation of Teachers. The common goal was to move arts education from a market-driven and inequitable patchwork of programs to a shared and coordinated focus on sustained arts education for all children. In essence, it meant transforming a wealth of independent resources into a system of partnerships and working to restore arts education systemwide.

At the core of the Center’s initial work was a \$21.5-million grants program to develop “customized partnerships”: rather than bringing in pre-established programs, schools would work with local cultural institutions – museums, theaters, musical groups, dance companies – to develop approaches to arts education specifically tailored to their context. The Center funded these customized collaborations in eighty schools from most of the city’s thirty-two districts and directly involved some 54,000 students.

The Center supported the partnership grants through professional development and peer exchange for all participants. The Parents as Arts Partners program, supported by the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Department of Education, funded educational and creative arts activities for

families of students in the Center's schools, with the goal of building long-term support for arts education.

Curriculum Development and Access Leadership grants, initiated in 2001, supported an exemplary group of school partnerships in New York City promoting the documentation of successful arts education programs and processes. The Center's Career Development Program exposes students, faculty, and parents to the many career paths associated with New York City's \$13-billion sector of the arts and related industries. Through internships, workshops, and events (including career days and job shadowing), the program develops career-specific knowledge and skills necessary for success in post-secondary institutions and gainful employment.

To promote its mission, the Center launched a first-of-its-kind public-awareness

campaign in spring 2000, with support from UBS PaineWebber: subway and bus advertisements to spread the message that a quality education includes the arts. In November 2000, the Center began exhibiting student artwork from its funded partnerships in a downtown Manhattan gallery to publicize the tangible results of the arts at work in schools.

Researchers at Education Development Center provided ongoing evaluation for the Center's work, generating case studies of sites that emphasize the uniqueness of each school community and its arts partners. The researchers' approach of juxtaposing case study information with larger-scale standardized measures (such as students' reading scores in successive years of the project) contributed a clear argument for qualitative measures informing quantitative results.

The term of the New York City Annenberg Challenge for Arts Education grant ended in June 2001. The Center for Arts Education continues

the activities and programs described above and has extended its work to include documentation and dissemination of exemplary artist-teacher collaborations and intensive professional development, including looking at student work and cross-site visits, as a result of a new five-year, \$12-million, one-for-one matching grant from the Annenberg Foundation.

The final evaluation report on the Center for Arts Education is available at [www.cae-nyc.org](http://www.cae-nyc.org) on the publications page.



# Transforming Education through the Arts Challenge: Establishing a National Network

*One school started with arts issues and moved into whole-school reform issues.*

*It's a very complex paradigm shift, based not only in the entire school staff but in the community.*

—Bryan Grove, *The Ohio State University, a TETAC regional consortium member organization*

The Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge (TETAC) aimed both to enhance the quality and status of arts education and to examine the extent to which the arts can complement and support overall school reform. A \$4.3-million Challenge grant to the National Arts Education Consortium (NAEC) for the TETAC project was matched one-for-one by the J. Paul Getty Trust. An additional one-for-one match was raised from local funders by the NAEC member organizations.

Unlike the other two arts projects, the primary stakeholders in the project were six regional member organizations in NAEC and their thirty-five partner schools in eight states, involving 25,000 students and 1,600 teachers. The Consortium's six member organizations provided their partner schools with services and materials to deepen their understanding of comprehensive arts education and whole-school reform and to assist them in developing plans and strategies for realizing and sustaining the program's goals. These services and materials included:

- Professional development in comprehensive arts

education integrated with other elements of whole school-reform;

- Technical assistance for developing and implementing comprehensive arts education and strategic reform plans;
- Instructional resources tied to the schools' comprehensive arts education and strategic reform plans; and
- Networking opportunities with the Consortium members, the other partner schools, and various national arts education and school-reform resources.

Across the six sites, the project included urban, suburban, and rural communities – some where support for the arts was hearty, others that were more cautious. Because TETAC worked outside of major cities, it was able to explore how a major arts education initiative takes place in smaller communities with fewer established cultural resources.

The project also illustrated how school reform initiatives need to evolve in order to operate effectively in changing circumstances. In the 1970s the Getty Foundation initiated its support for visual

arts education in a program known as Discipline-Based Arts Education (DBAE). At the heart of the initiative was the belief that the arts ought to be taught with the same rigor and content as other subject-matter areas. The program originated in California, where there were virtually no arts specialists. As a result, DBAE developers designed and published carefully constructed units that allowed a wide-range of teachers to make visual arts education a part of their repertoire.

Over time, it became clear that so centralized an effort did not reflect the variations in sites. Thus, the original DBAE program evolved dramatically. Currently, it includes more than visual arts; sites are encouraged to adapt the approach to their classrooms and contexts, and the arts are used both as an area of study and as a starting place for integrated curricula.

One of TETAC's major goals was to achieve parity for arts education with other core subjects, such as reading, mathematics, and science. A second goal was to examine the role of the classroom teacher as well as the arts specialist in promoting school improvement. TETAC

advocated arts education that is: *comprehensive*, including aesthetics, criticism, history, and production; *integrated* with other subjects around important themes or big ideas; and *constructivist*, using "inquiry-based," or experiential, teaching and learning practices. TETAC's ultimate aim was to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to enhance students' achievement across a wide range of disciplines.

Researchers at Westat who evaluated the project designed measures to look at two major outcomes: 1) elementary students' visual arts learning (using items that build on the 1996 NAEP assessment of arts learning); and 2) teachers' design of effective units of study that integrate the arts as a way of understanding challenging concepts. TETAC staff and advisors collaborated with evaluators at Westat to develop a third approach to collecting data on student achievement, looking exclusively at learning in the arts.

Research findings on Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge are available at [www.aep-arts.org](http://www.aep-arts.org) on the Evaluation and Research page.





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