

Spotlighting Arts Education

The arts

The arts are not pretty bulletin boards. ... They are not frivolous entertainment. The arts are our humanity. They are the languages of civilization, ... systems of meaning that have real utility. This is why schools that provide students with the means and the encouragement to explore these realms provide a better education [and] why the arts are a mark of excellence in American schooling.

THE ANNENBERG CHALLENGE

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An Extraordinary Gift – A Challenge to America

Announced in December 1993 at the White House, Ambassador Walter H. Annenberg's \$500-million "Challenge to the Nation" is the largest single gift to public K-12 education in U.S. history. Conceived as a public/private partnership, the Annenberg gift requires matching investments from both public and private sources. It presents a moral and political challenge, as well, asking Americans to believe that public schools can educate all children well and to take the necessary steps to help schools achieve this goal.

Eighteen locally designed Challenge projects have operated in thirty-five states, funding 2,450 public schools that serve nearly 1.5 million students and 83,000 teachers. Public and private sources have contributed over \$600 million in matching funds; private donors to the Challenge included 1,476 corporations, foundations, and individuals.

A National Effort Locally Pursued

Shunning one-size-fits-all solutions, the Challenge believes that the most effective strategies for improving public schools are built upon a community's particular strengths and needs. Each Challenge project, therefore, was designed by a local planning group comprised of educators, foundation officers, and community and business leaders. Each is run by an independent, nonprofit entity – in most instances, specially created organizations that evolved from the collaborative planning groups – with oversight by a community governing board.

As a result, the Challenge embraces a wide range of school reform strategies, structures, and processes: superintendent-led, districtwide efforts; schools in networks or linked with outside partners; and regional partnerships to promote vision and community despite geographic separation.

Through their varied means, all Challenge projects aim to improve student performance, upgrade teachers' skills, increase parental and community involvement, and constructively influence education policy. Animating the Challenge is a commitment to collaboration between and among students, teachers, parents, schools, and their wider communities and outreach to district offices, state capitals, and the nation's capital.

The Annenberg Foundation administers the grants to local Challenge projects. Staff at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University consult regularly with Challenge project directors, sponsor cross-project activities, and provide technical assistance to the sites.

"Art is humanity's most essential, most universal language. It is not a frill, but a necessary part of communication. The quality of civilization can be measured through its music, dance, drama, architecture, visual art and literature. We must give our children knowledge and understanding of civilization's most profound works."

— ERNEST L. BOYER,
FORMER HEAD OF THE
CARNEGIE FOUNDATION
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF
TEACHING AND FORMER U.S.
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION



art

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— CHARLES FOWLER



Arts in the Challenge

As part of his Challenge to improve education generally for urban and rural students, Ambassador Walter Annenberg chose to include a particular emphasis on improving arts education in American schools. Long a champion of the visual and performing arts, the Ambassador believed that the arts deserved a prominent place in the curriculum and he sought to encourage high-quality arts instruction that did not depend on a student's background or where he or she lived.

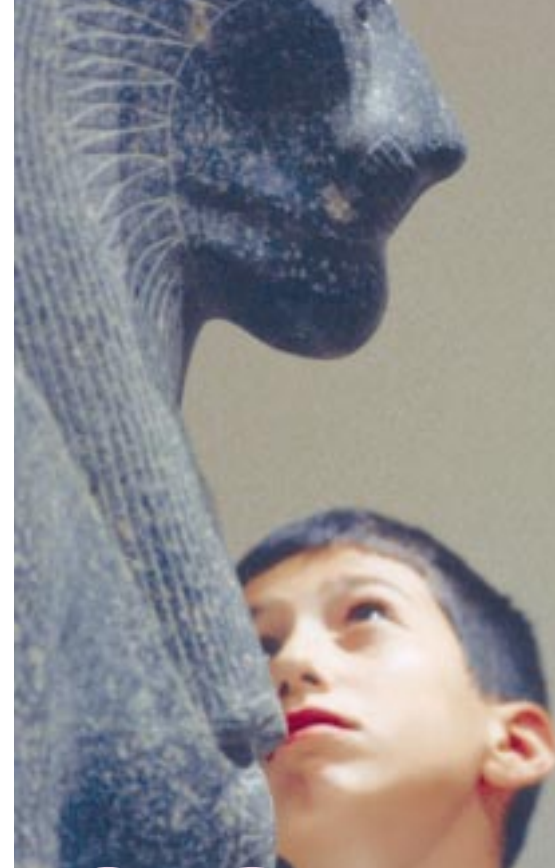
A growing body of research has linked the study of music, visual art, dance, and drama to rising student achievement. A study by the U.S. Department of Education in the early 1990s revealed improvement not only in content-area achievement (especially among children with academic or behavioral problems who were identified as having special talent in the arts) but also in areas such as risk taking, problem solving, cooperating, and taking initiative.

Yet, too often the arts have been cut from school programs where administrators, facing budget restrictions, see the arts as an expendable “frill.” The Challenge took the view expressed by Ernest L. Boyer, former head of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and former U.S. Secretary of Education: “Art is humanity's most essential, most universal language.... We must give our children knowledge and understanding of civilization's most profound works.”

To support and promote high-quality arts education for all students, the Challenge provided \$20 million in matching funds for three distinctive arts projects: the Center for Arts Education in New York City, Arts for Academic Achievement in Minneapolis, and the Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge, a national effort cosponsored with the J. Paul Getty Trust.

Each Challenge Arts initiative has created innovative ways to infuse the arts into the daily academic life of the schools, developing classroom teachers' ability to incorporate the arts into the core curriculum and to use them in exploring the ideas at the heart of their disciplines. Professional expertise in the arts is provided by school-based arts teachers and through ongoing partnerships that pair schools with local artists and cultural institutions.

Together, these projects are working with nearly 8,500 teachers in 185 schools serving more than 100,000 students across the country.



new york

At Manhattan's Martin Luther King, Jr. High School, located across the street from Lincoln Center, artists from the New York City Opera co-teach tenth-grade classes in “residencies” for several weeks. With help from these professionals, students explore the operatic form through improvisation, coaching, analysis, and performance projects. For a *Madama Butterfly* residency, for example, the teaching artist and English teacher compare the use of power in the opera to that in Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities*. The social studies teacher links the opera's musical and dramatic motifs to concepts of Western imperialism and cultural dissonance, issues under study in his Global Studies class. And in four-week internships, twenty King students spend their afternoons at the opera, learning the workings of production, arts administration, marketing, and arts education. “The opera program has changed the way we deal with students and the way that they respond to us,” says one participating teacher. “Students are much more actively engaged now. And we demand a lot more of them, because we know how much they can do.”

The Center for Arts Education – New York City

“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 awarded in March 1996 – supports the Center for Arts Education, an independent, nonprofit organization whose guiding purposes are to institutionalize arts instruction as part of the core curriculum and to use the arts as a catalyst for whole-school change. “First we ask what makes a good education,” says Center director Hollis Headrick. “Then we ask how our city – this motherlode of culture in which we sit – can help us get there.”

The Center has worked in a unique public/private partnership with the New York City Board of Education, the Department of Cultural Affairs, and the United Federation of Teachers to successfully move arts education from an uncoordinated and inequitable patchwork (the legacy of drastic cutbacks in the city's public school arts programs) to a collective focus that can now be sustained beyond the five-year life of the Challenge.

At the core of the Center's work is a \$21.5-million grants program that pairs public schools with local cultural institutions such as museums, theaters, musical groups, and dance companies. Schools (either individually or in networks) collaborate with their partners to develop customized approaches to arts education. The Center supports partnerships in eighty schools from all of the city's thirty-two districts and involves some 54,000 students.

The Center sponsors several other programs to supplement the partnership grants. It provides professional development for all participants. The “Parents as Arts Partners” program, supported by the Department of Cultural Affairs, funds arts activities for families of students in the Center's schools, with the goal of building long-term support for arts education. The Center has also initiated a career-development internship that exposes students and teachers alike to the many career possibilities in New York City's nonprofit arts industry and arts-related businesses.

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 spread the message that a quality education includes the arts. In November, the Center opened a gallery in downtown Manhattan to exhibit the artwork of students in its funded partnerships.

The term of the New York City Arts Challenge grant ends in June 2001. The Center for Arts Education has received a new five-year, \$12-million, one-for-one matching grant from the Annenberg Foundation to continue and to extend the work begun under the Challenge grant.





Arts for Academic Achievement – Minneapolis

“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 HORNBACKER,
DIRECTOR, ARTS FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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

Building on existing arts initiatives in the district, Arts for Academic Achievement has created a network of K–12 schools that use the arts as a means of school reform. Nearly half of the district’s 100 schools, and some 24,000 students and nearly 2,000 teachers, are part of the project, teaming with more than 400 teaching artist partners and arts organizations.

Through the arts, the project seeks to spur changes at all levels to improve student achievement: changes in classroom teaching and learning, in district policy making, and in relationships among schools, parents, and communities. In year three, preliminary research indicates that significant changes are occurring, and the Minneapolis school district has already augmented its commitment to the arts, which are included in its core curriculum.

Staff development plays a key role in the success of the project. Arts for Academic Achievement co-sponsors the annual three-day summer “Urban Retreat for the Arts,” where some 400 teachers and artists participate in sessions on effective teaching practices, opportunities to explore partnerships, and tours of public art, museums, and theaters. The project also co-sponsors an annual conference for 200 artists, “Shapeshifting: The Magic of the Teaching Artist,” and several smaller workshops for principals and administrators on the power of integrative arts education. Through a partnership with The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, more than 200 teachers each year receive training in Visual Thinking Strategies, a vehicle for aesthetic development and critical thinking through discussion of art that is applicable across the curriculum.

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

Arts for Academic Achievement is funded through June 2002.

Teachers at Bancroft Elementary were concerned about their students’ low reading scores. Realizing that sequencing and patterning skills were prerequisites for success, the teachers partnered with several artists – an actor-storyteller, a quilt maker, a singer who teaches improvisation, and a taiko drum expert – to engage the children in integrated arts that center on sequencing and patterning. The result over the course of two years was a marked increase in the reading skills.

Performing for their peers in original plays and concerts, the children also showed gains in courage and presence, as well as a sense of joy. The taiko drum venture took on a life of its own when students made their own drums from donated tires covered in strapping tape and sawed obsolete window poles into drum sticks. The drummers have taken their show to the nation’s Capitol and to parks, malls, and colleges. The teachers learned along with their students and have taken their own show on the road to conferences where they tell of their partnership successes in teaching in and through the arts and of the efforts to improve reading that transformed the life and spirit of their school.

minneapolis

On the lawn of New Orleans’s Lusher Elementary School, schoolchildren in togas perform in a Greek symposium. Like fifth-century messengers they race to light the torch, launching the event. Standing on pedestals they declaim Olympian feats and foibles. In choreographed symmetry they dance out their ideas and stories, along with those of Pythagoras and Homer. This TETAC partner school places the arts at the heart of all learning. Infused into every classroom’s curriculum, the arts level the playing field for students with different abilities and styles of learning. The arts also demand hard work and concentration. “There’s a discipline that comes from art that definitely carries over into other fields of study,” says Principal Kathleen Riedlinger. The school’s impressive results back up her observation. Though 40 percent of Lusher students come from households below the poverty line, the school’s performance index (combining standardized test scores with other measures like attendance and dropout rates) puts it in the top fifteen schools in Louisiana, and first in Orleans Parish.



The Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge

“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, OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY,
A TETAC PARTNER

The Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge (TETAC) aims 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.

The primary stakeholders in the project are the six regional member organizations in NAEC and their thirty-five partner schools in eight states, representing urban, suburban, and rural communities and involving 25,000 students and 1,600 teachers. Additional partners include school districts, universities, state departments of education, state arts councils, museums, foundations, community groups, corporations, and other cultural institutions.

One of TETAC’s major goals is to reinforce the standing of arts education in the schools and to achieve parity for arts education with other core subjects, such as reading, mathematics, and science. A second goal focuses on whole-school change, placing heavy emphasis on the role of the classroom teacher, as well as the arts specialist. TETAC advocates a blending of three, sometimes separate, approaches to arts instruction: *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 is to improve student learning in both the arts and non-arts areas. The program is designed to benefit all students, not just those with an identified giftedness for the arts. The quality of teaching and learning in a well-implemented TETAC program is expected to enhance students’ achievement across a wide range of disciplines.

TETAC envisions complex and multifaceted changes as a consequence of the interactive relationship between the arts and school reform. The Consortium’s six member organizations provide the 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 include:

- 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.

Funding for TETAC continues through August 2001.

Early Signs of Success

Can schools transform themselves through the arts? How would they know if it did happen? These simple questions go to the heart of the Challenge Arts projects. Each project is required to support rigorous evaluation of its progress and accomplishments. In addition, the Annenberg Institute has commissioned a study of the impact of the three arts projects. Those results will not be available until all the projects are completed and the data have been analyzed. In the meantime, a number of indicators suggest that bringing the arts alive for students, teachers, and parents can help to improve and transform education.

- Ginni Grossenbacher's ninth- and tenth-graders' test scores have risen an average of five to eight percentile points in vocabulary and reading comprehension since she began using art as a focus for the study of literature. The Elk Grove, California, reading specialist regularly uses techniques she acquired from a TETAC summer institute. For example, her classes study early rock carvings as a way to explore symbolism in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. "Right away they came up with interpretations and abstractions that went way beyond what they were doing using only text," she says. "I can see the kids start to look at the world in different ways."
- A grant from New York's Center for Arts Education enabled the Career Education Center to incorporate a comprehensive arts program for all of its 1,200 students – sixteen-to-twenty-one-year-old former dropouts who are homeless, incarcerated, hospitalized, or housed in group facilities – as they resume their education. In a single year, the passing rate of students taking the GED rose 5 percent. "A part of it is definitely attributable to bringing arts into the academic arena," says the school's principal, Sherry Zekowski.
- The quality of work, as well as students' commitment and tenacity, improved after the interdisciplinary humanities program was introduced at South High School in Minneapolis. "When we teach reading, writing, art in such a seamless way, it seems to release a thought process that kids don't find anywhere else," says former arts teacher Sally French, who now heads the communications program for Arts for Academic Achievement. "It's staggering to see the creativity that comes from them and astonishing to find out what they think about."
- Brooklyn's P.S. 156 used NYC Center for Arts Education funding to create four partnerships and has saturated its K-5 curriculum with dance, movement, and visual arts. Children visit museums, attend performances, create original pieces, read related materials, and write continuously. Although arts instruction has taken time away from "test sophistication" efforts, students' scores on district- and city-wide tests have increased across the board.
- Teachers at Cleveland's Newton D. Baker Elementary School have integrated music, dance, theatre, and the visual arts into every subject area, not just as part of the curriculum but as methods of assessment as well. State standardized test scores among the 90 percent lower-income, 72 percent African American student body have risen steadily; by 1998 Baker ranked third in the district across the board. The TETAC-funded program boasts strong parental support as well. A back-to-school night at the Cleveland Art Museum drew 600 family members, and parents have petitioned the district to extend the integrated arts approach to the middle and high schools their children will soon attend.
- Fourth-graders at Minneapolis's Brookside Elementary School took a reading test after their usual reading lesson, then participated in an arts integration activity on the same material. Although they weren't retested until the next day, all but two students performed better on the test. (One stayed the same; one went down, alerting the teacher to a previously unrecognized learning disability).

"The arts move you from a culture of answers to a culture of questions. They disrupt convention, control, predictability; yet they require discipline and mentorship."

— DAVID O'FALLON,
DIRECTOR,
THE PERPICH CENTER
FOR ARTS EDUCATION



Meeting the Challenge

The three Challenge Arts projects have achieved notable success in meeting the overall Challenge goal of bringing additional private and public dollars to the effort for school improvement. Each is also looking ahead to find ways to sustain and scale up the efforts begun under the Challenge.

- All three Challenge Arts projects met their matching-dollar targets, leveraging nearly \$35 million on top of the \$20-million Annenberg funding for arts education.
- The Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge significantly exceeded its one-for-one matching requirement. TETAC leveraged \$2.27 from thirty-four funders for every dollar from the Annenberg Challenge.
- In New York City, the Center for Arts Education has helped leverage significant new public funding for arts education. Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and the New York City Board of Education have allocated \$225 million over four years (FY98-01) to Project ARTS, a plan to provide arts instruction in all grades. The Board of Education's annual baseline funding for Project ARTS is now \$75 million.
- The Minneapolis school district has increased the number of art and music teachers and has hired an additional fine arts coordinator. In a major policy change, the district budgeted \$100,000 for the purchase and repair of musical instruments, formerly the responsibility of individual schools, which seldom had the capital to underwrite such investments.

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