

# STATE POLICY PILOT PROGRAM

## Summary Findings and Final Report





## About Americans for the Arts

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The mission of Americans for the Arts is to serve, advance, and lead the network of organizations and individuals who cultivate, promote, sustain, and support the arts in America.

Founded in 1960, Americans for the Arts is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education. From offices in Washington, DC and New York City, we provide a rich array of programs that meet the needs of more than 150,000 members and stakeholders. We are dedicated to representing and serving local communities and to creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts.

## About the State Policy Pilot Program

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The State Policy Pilot Program (SP3) was a three-year initiative of Americans for the Arts focused on a three-pronged approach of data collection, technical assistance, and knowledge exchange to work toward influencing implementation of federal mandates or programs at the state level; expanding state support of arts education in policy and appropriations; and impacting local access to arts programs and instruction for students. Through annual grants and technical assistance, Americans for the Arts empowered leaders and stakeholders from ten state teams seeking to strengthen arts education by advancing state policy in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Wyoming.

Visit [www.AmericansForTheArts.org/SP3](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/SP3) for more info!

# Acknowledgements

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Americans for the Arts would like to thank the following funding partners for their significant support of the State Policy Pilot Program:

**CHARMAINE AND DAN  
WARMENHOVEN**



## Introduction

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The State Policy Pilot Program, or more commonly known as SP3, was a three-year initiative based out of the Arts Education Program at Americans for the Arts—developed in alignment with the national shift towards state-level educational policy-making. The program focused on a three-pronged approach of data collection, technical assistance, and knowledge exchange; its objective was to enable the development of leadership in state-level policy-makers advocates, researchers, and grantmakers towards developing achievable policy pursuits and sustainable advocacy infrastructures.

Through SP3, Americans for the Arts hoped to foster a nationwide culture of policy literacy and advocacy empowerment for arts and education leaders across the country with the ultimate goals of:

- advancing arts education by influencing implementation of federal mandates or programs at the state level;
- expanding state support of arts education in policy and appropriations; and
- impacting local access to arts programs and instruction for students.

The following report will detail the overarching findings from this three-year initiative and provide recommendations for further efforts to advance advancing state-level policy and advocacy for arts education in America.

## SP3: Strengthening Arts Education by Advancing State Policy and Advocacy

Over the course of three years, the State Policy Pilot Program conducted national research to foster a better understanding of the status of arts education in states across the U.S., provided opportunities for greater networking among various stakeholders involved in state-level policy and advocacy work, and engaged closely with these ten states through through convening, annual grants, and technical assistance.

### WYOMING

Wyoming had a twofold plan: first, to design and implement a statewide data collection project; and second, to follow that with a strategic action plan to inform the work of a task force.

### CALIFORNIA

California developed and launched [title1arts.org](https://title1arts.org); worked with the California Department of Education to release a new letter outlining the appropriate uses of federal funding to support arts education; developed a series of short films around Title I; and created a leadership cohort of county arts administrators to help connect with school leaders.

### ARIZONA

Arizona worked to create sustainable partnerships; to build out Arizona Citizens for the Arts's VoterVoice software for grassroots advocacy; and to influence the state's accountability model for schools to support a comprehensive curriculum including the arts. The team also created two new websites, one to address how the arts can be used in Title I and one for the state's newly adopted K-12 arts education standards.

## MINNESOTA

Minnesota focused on implementing the state's existing policy on Teacher Development and Evaluation and created a new resource, **Arts Teacher Development and Evaluation: What to Look for** (in Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theater, and Visual Arts), available on the Perpich Center for the Arts' and Minnesota Department of Education's website.

## MICHIGAN

Michigan sought to reconvene and reconstruct the Michigan Arts Education Roundtable; establish an ongoing collection of state data to better define the quality, reach, instruction, and access to arts education; and develop a statewide campaign to activate decision-makers to support arts education.

## MASSACHUSETTS

Through a widespread and expanded coalition of nine state, local, and nonprofit agencies, Massachusetts was successful in advocating for the state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) to have arts access and participation data listed on every school's public profile 'report card.' Additionally, ESE agreed to begin the revision of the state's Arts Curriculum Framework, last revised in 1999.

## NEW JERSEY

New Jersey advocated for increased local participation and instruction in arts programs in support of a long-term collective impact strategy. Strategies to achieve this plan include a public awareness campaign, ARTS ED NOW; the development of local advocacy campaigns to improve education policies; a focus on increased use of data assets for arts education on a local level; and the development and implementation of a school board candidate survey platform.

## ARKANSAS

Arkansas established a statewide arts advocacy organization, Arkansans for the Arts, which began by partnering with the Arkansas Department of Education and the Arkansas Arts Council to ensure that the 2014 Arkansas Fine Arts Academic Standards were effectively implemented in classrooms throughout the state.

## OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma convened a task force of education professionals from rural and urban communities across the state; compiled and analyzed data reflecting the current arts education situation; and developed a plan with specific action steps and priorities for Oklahoma schools.

### 50-STATE ADVOCACY EFFORTS:

- K-12 Arts Education Standards Revisions
- Arts-friendly Provisions in ESSA Implementation
- Continued Knowledge Sharing and Networking of State Arts Education Policy Leaders and Advocates.

## NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina focused their efforts on the remaining goals of the state's Comprehensive Arts Education Plan: engaging and guiding stakeholders with increasing communication and consistent messaging; advocating for a graduation requirement for the arts; and protecting and expanding public sector funding for arts education.

The results of this program include numerous reports, case studies, and a network of state leaders ready to enact policy change and advocacy initiatives to advance arts education across the nation. The intention of these tools and resources is to provide greater policy literacy and understanding of how other states and stakeholders can undertake similar advocacy efforts for statewide policy advancement.

REPORTS	CASE STUDIES	NETWORKING
The State Status Report: A Review of State and Regional Arts Education Studies	Early stage state project narratives	Culminating State Policy Pilot Program Summit in November 2017
Gap Analysis: Barriers and Successes of Arts Education Policy Implementation	Final case studies for each state, detailing their goals, process, and learnings from the 3-year program	Co-convening with the State Arts Action Network (SAAN)
A Decade of Federal Arts in Education Funding: Trends, Analysis, and the Story Behind the First 10 Years	Supplemental documents and materials from policy activities around the country	Launch of the State Educational Policy Network (SEPN)
		Co-convening annual state policy symposium with the Arts Education Partnership

## Highlight of Findings

From 2014 to 2017, the State Policy Pilot Program fostered a community of learning among stakeholders across the nation and in a 10-state cohort. Several national trends were observed, which can serve as foundational underpinnings for additional statewide policy initiatives seeking to advance arts education. Additionally, several themes in skill development were identified to help foster greater learning and build capacity for leadership in states across the nation. Program evaluators, RMC Research, concluded on six overarching lessons, which are highlighted here and can be explored more in their report.

1. Build relationships; they are the bedrock of advocacy
2. Be both nimble and persistent; leaders must trust each other and share values and priorities
3. Remain flexible; a spirit of entrepreneurship, adaptability, and opportunity is key
4. Do your homework: the education policy enterprise is complex and layered
5. Don't wait for the perfect information or the perfect team
6. Keep student success in the forefront

This advice serves as a meaningful foundation of any efforts, whether federal, state, or local, in advancing arts education through policy and advocacy endeavors.

Throughout the program, four macro-themes were identified for the implementation of successful policy pursuits and advocacy efforts:

- **Applying the Federal-State-Local Policy Pipeline:** Establishing a pathway to link federal policy frameworks and federal guidance to state-level education policy development to impact local implementation of educational resources.
- **Utilizing Data to Support Policy Development and Advocacy Efforts:** research and analysis will both inform and influence the path toward devising an effective policy or advocacy strategy.
- **Embracing the Power of Convening:** coming together as diverse stakeholders, whether at the national, state, or local levels is an essential part of relationship building, plan crafting, and policy development.
- **Sharing Knowledge Among State Leaders:** documenting and disseminating the good, the bad, and the innovative concepts from your work is key to have ownership and a stake in the shared advancement of the field of arts education.

Considering the above and from the work with state teams, additional themes were observed about state-level policy development and advocacy infrastructure building.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT	ADVOCACY INFRASTRUCTURE
Sustaining Appropriations for Statewide Initiatives	Sustaining Core Leadership
Revising K-12 Arts Education Standards	Forming Relationships with Coalitions
Arts Provisions in ESSA Implementation	Fostering Allies Among Elected Officials
Enabling Title I Policy Pathway	Building an Information Base
Building Infrastructure for Stakeholder Engagement	Crafting Consistent and Effective Message
	Creating Communication Infrastructure for Grassroots Advocacy

A further exploration of all themes can be found throughout this report.

# TIMELINE AND IMPLEMENTATION

The following section outlines the timeline and theoretical framework of the State Policy Pilot Program. An archive of documents and video updates from various points of the project can be found on [www.AmericansFortheArts.org/SP3](http://www.AmericansFortheArts.org/SP3).

Formally launched in August 2014 at the National Conference of State Legislatures' Legislative Summit, Americans for the Arts voiced a new commitment to state-level policy development and advocacy infrastructure building through the State Policy Pilot Program. The program systematically advanced arts education across the nation, making it the largest arts education advocacy grant program in the country.





**The program’s three-pronged strategy helped influence implementation of federal mandates or programs at the state-level; expand state support of arts education in policy and appropriations; and impact local access to arts programs and instruction for students. It accomplished these goals through three main strategies outlined above.**

Advocates from national associations, local school districts, and businesses meet together at the State Policy Symposium in 2015



## STRATEGY 1

### Utilizing Data

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In Strategy 1: Utilizing Data, the underpinning research for SP3 was conducted by a series of researchers from 2013-2015 and manifested itself in a several reports surveying current research available on state data sets regarding arts education, the arts education policies (and implementation of those policies) in every state, and the effectiveness of federally funded programs supported by those policies in local communities:

- The State Status Report: A Review of State and Regional Arts Education Studies by Yael Z. Silk, Ed.M. and Stacey Mahan, Ed.M. of Silk Strategic Arts LLC and Robert Morrison of Quadrant Research
- Gap Analysis: Barriers and Successes of Arts Education Policy Implementation by Barb Whitney
- A Decade of Federal Arts in Education Funding: Trends, Analysis, and the Story Behind the First 10 Years by Yael Silk

These reports identified national trends and articulated the federal-state-local implementation pathways from national policy to school-based implementation. The findings stimulate interesting discussion among state-level stakeholders and can inform the practices in policy development or advocacy strategy essential to advancing arts education across the nation.



Yo-Yo Ma performing at the Announcement of SP3 at the NCSL Legislative Summit in 2014

## STRATEGY 2

### Networking and Knowledge Sharing

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In Strategy 2: Networking and Knowledge Sharing, Americans for the Arts brought together representatives from the ten state teams on a biannual basis from Fall 2014 – Spring 2017 to foster knowledge sharing and networking with adjacent national networks. For example, the cohort was co-located with the State Arts Action Network (SAAN)'s meeting in New Orleans, in conjunction with the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies' Assembly in November 2014.

During SP3's biannual meetings, peer-to-peer knowledge exchange was guided through presentations, visitations, and support for collaboration. Program leaders created an environment in which cross-state policy opportunities could emerge. As the states learned about the policy successes of their peers, several acted upon the chance to adapt the experiences to their own state contexts. As an example, California's approach to using Title I resources for arts education proved enlightening to several state teams since all states receive Title I funds. The advocacy strategies and tools developed by the California team were seen as immediately applicable by other teams to pursue their own Title I Arts initiatives.

## STRATEGY 3

### Working with States

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In Strategy 3: Working with States, Americans for the Arts aimed to select ten states which operated in vastly different educational and political contexts, representing a diverse array of expertise and advancement in the field of arts education. The state teams understood that participation involved collaboration across agencies within their states and commitment to developing and implementing a policy strategy. Each state was expected to form a state team to steer the project—drawing from state education agencies, state arts councils, members of advocacy networks, and elected officials.

State teams created written action plans at the outset of the three years, updated those plans annually in response to changing contexts, and prepared culminating case studies that described what worked well and what did not. State teams received grants of \$10,000 per year as well as travel stipends for two team members to attend biannual SP3 gatherings as well as additional support for project-specific needs as required. Additionally, Americans for the Arts provided each state team with customized coaching and technical assistance throughout the three-year pilot, via web-based tools, site visits, and funding for portions of their statewide initiatives.

Of note, the time during the program was particularly volatile in terms of political change. The mid-term elections of 2014, the passage and initial implementation of the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015*, and the presidential election of 2016 made for once-dynamic, educational ecosystems to enter a period of flux, requiring states to adapt.

**Read the case studies found on:**  
**[www.AmericansfortheArts.org/SP3](http://www.AmericansfortheArts.org/SP3)**

## INITIAL GOALS

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<b>ARIZONA</b>	Build out an influential network of stakeholders and communicate effectively and quickly with local voters
<b>ARKANSAS</b>	Implement newly-revised state fine arts academic standards and develop regional relationships for a future distributed advocacy organization
<b>CALIFORNIA</b>	Build out the Title I funding policy pathway and roll-out statewide
<b>MASSACHUSETTS</b>	Pursue a high school arts requirement for admission to the state's public four-year universities and include arts in STEM education policy and practice
<b>MICHIGAN</b>	Reconvene arts education roundtable to advance a policy agenda to increase investment in arts education
<b>MINNESOTA</b>	Develop arts-tailored tools to support teacher evaluation and professional development, including legislative passage of a high school graduation requirement in the arts.
<b>NEW JERSEY</b>	Build a communication campaign and system to engage local citizens with decision makers and developing a platform to share school board candidates' positions
<b>NORTH CAROLINA</b>	Develop supports to implement the state's Comprehensive Arts Education Plan
<b>OKLAHOMA</b>	Gather data to build policy recommendations
<b>WYOMING</b>	Collect data about the status of arts education and convene stakeholders to develop a policy agenda

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Check out the final projects outlined in the map on Pages 4-5. Note how the projects changed over time. You can read more about how and why in the states' individual case studies.

# FINDINGS

The following section articulates the findings from each of the three goals and provides an overview of numerous reports and documents; the full content can be found on [www.AmericansForTheArts.org/SP3](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/SP3).

## STRATEGY 1 FINDINGS

### Utilizing Data

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To bolster the work of the program, Americans for the Arts began by conducting foundational research to inform the design and projects of the ten pilot states by surveying current research available on state data sets regarding arts education, the arts education policies (and implementation of those policies) in every state, and the effectiveness of federally-funded programs supported by those policies in local communities. Below please find the summary reports from each study.

One study, the **Heat Map**, was completed, but it became operationalized through the [Arts Education Navigator](#) online tool rather than as a report. It was made clear that personnel change at a rapid pace, and having an online resource, rather than print publication, would be most successful.



Staff and state team participants create art to describe advocacy practices utilized in the State Policy Pilot Program

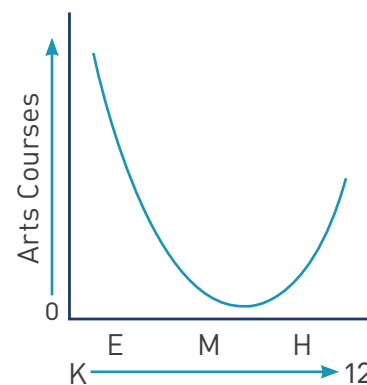
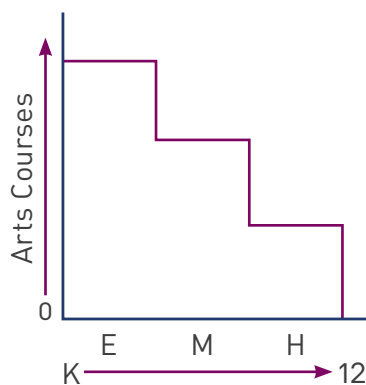
## THE STATE STATUS REPORT: A REVIEW OF STATE AND REGIONAL ARTS EDUCATION STUDIES

In order to address this gap in access to arts education, leaders need data to determine which students are receiving education in which art forms, how often, and by whom. While organizations like Americans for the Arts have requested this type of data be collected nationally—by the National Center for Education Statistics for instance—this has only happened twice in the last two decades, placing the burden of data collection on the states. Some states have engaged in surveys to get an idea of what is happening statewide, and others are starting to tap into their departments of education’s longitudinal data systems to collect real enrollment data for all students statewide.

This meta-analysis of current state studies by many state, regional, or national organizations examines student access to arts education. This analysis helps understand current trends across states and to discover what type of assistance may be needed in individual states.

The State Status Report provides a review of existing arts education surveys and studies from states and regions to compare different methodologies and metrics employed in research initiatives. The analysis will assist states in planning their future arts education research endeavors. This report compares several areas across states—availability of arts education, school and student outcomes, and policy compliance. This analysis illuminates key findings across all states, such as:

- Overall, a majority of schools studied in these reports offer at least one arts course. The reported availability of some arts instruction averaged 88 percent. Visual arts and music are still the two dominant disciplines offered in public schools, while dance and theater are lagging.
- Student enrollment typically follows two different patterns. The first is a descending staircase with the highest participation levels in elementary school when arts classes are mandatory; a drop off in middle school when schools offer arts courses as electives; and a further decline still in high school when typically, only those who specialize in the arts continue. The other pattern is a backwards, diagonal “j” with high elementary school participation, a drop in middle school participation, and an uptick in high school arts participation.



- Researchers found positive relationships between arts education levels and graduation rates, behavior, attendance, dropout rates, and intended college attendance.
- When taken as a whole, states perform unevenly in their ability to meet the established graduation requirements.
- School size was the biggest factor in predicting availability of arts education regardless of state.



Overall, the report concludes with recommendations for collecting and utilizing data in states across the nation.

<b>What available data can answer the research questions?</b> <b>How can we access it?</b>	<b>What are the information gaps?</b> <b>What supplemental data collection protocols do we need to design?</b>
<b>DATA THAT MAY BE AVAILABLE TODAY</b> School performance data School budget Number of FT and PT arts specialists on staff Teacher assignment data Student enrollment	<b>STUDY TOPICS THAT WILL LIKELY REQUIRE SUPPLEMENTAL DATA COLLECTION</b> Professional development Partnerships with cultural organizations Funding beyond the school budget Grade weighting Arts integration

## GAP ANALYSIS: BARRIERS AND SUCCESSES OF ARTS EDUCATION POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The Gap Analysis was a study conducted to gain a greater understanding of trends and influences in arts education by comparing and contrasting policies currently in the Arts Education Partnerships’ [ArtScan](#) database with in-depth interviews with state level leaders. The two pronged-approach was aimed at isolating anomalies in policy versus practice for individual states and the country while also identifying particularly effective language and trends—which may serve as models for future policy development.

Americans for the Arts identified multiple leaders across various agencies and statewide organizations in all 50 states, who gave interviews to provide for multiple voices to weigh in from various roles in the education, arts, and advocacy fields. Survey questions designed to uncover how policy is (or is not) implemented in each state by illuminating any nuance in the state’s policies, discussing where policies differ from practice, noting additional sources of policy such as case law, legal opinions, or other mandates, and revealing implementation factors such as leadership and advocacy. All interview information has remained confidential but has been aggregated—both from the various interviews within each state and again from all 50 states—to inform the final report.

Not surprisingly, most states' policies dictate the importance of arts instruction; however, surveys overwhelmingly report inadequate resources for implementation, causing a gap between the policy and the practice. It has globally been observed that in terms of arts education policy, there is often 'lip service' that is offered by leaders and within policy documents, which fails to meet the standards of equitable access in practice. This report identified trends in the successes and barriers to implementation of state-level policy, and concluded with recommendations for the field in closing the gaps between policy and implementation.

State leaders find these factors key to successful policy implementation, with sub-factors listed in successive order of importance

**Administrative Influence:** Professional development; standards development; Leadership Values the arts; Curriculum development; Department of Education position; Coalition or task force on arts education; Quality programs lead to recognition

**Engaging stakeholders:** Sharing successes; Defining and implementing advocacy action steps; Engaging policymaker/political leaders; Engaging school board, parents, groups, district; Engaging principals and administrators; Providing data; Arts as a local plan; Valuing the arts as integral to holistic learning; Teachers as advocates; Student engagement

**Curriculum:** Arts organizations/institutions facilitating learning; Arts integration; Rigorous arts and academic curriculum; Required courses; Teaching artists in schools; statewide initiatives like A+ Schools

**Funding:** Arts council grants; Local control; Private resources

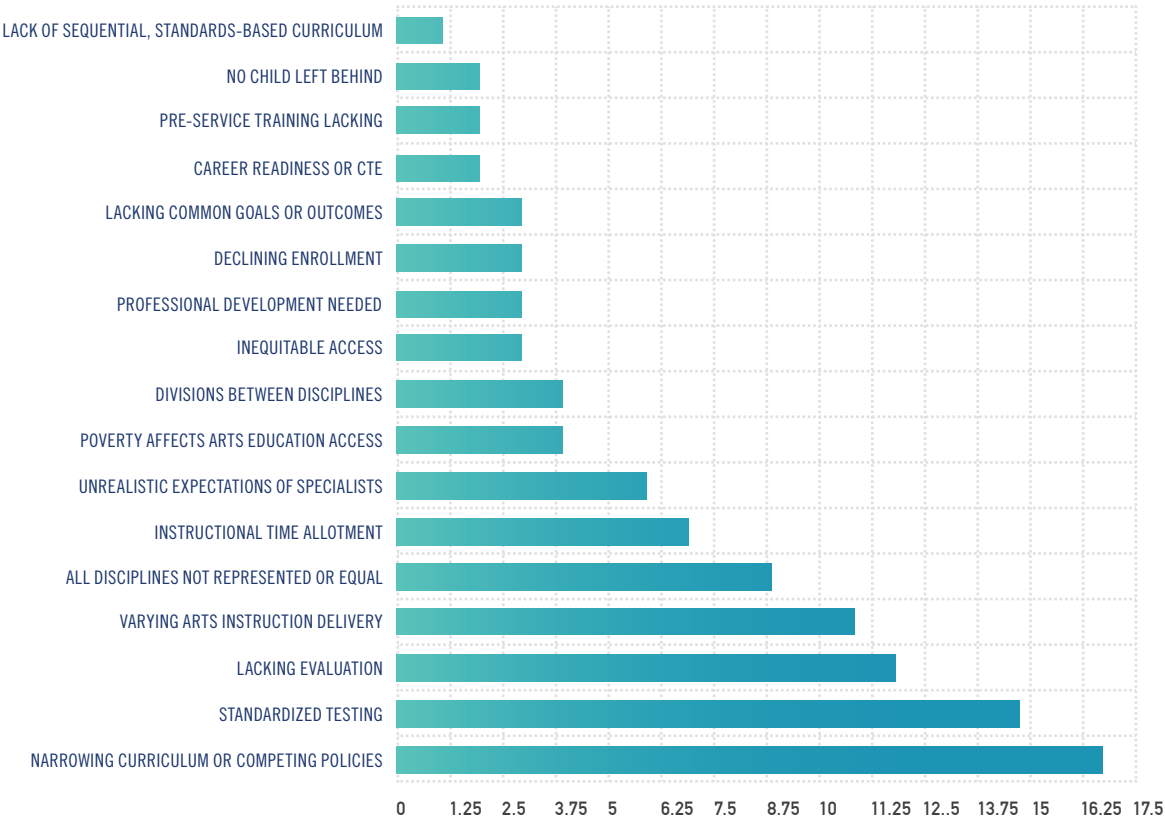
State leaders find these factors as barriers to successful policy implementation, with sub-factors listed in successive order of importance

**Lack of Resources:** Lack of funding; Serving varying needs (urban, suburban, rural); Inequality of allocated funding; Lack of data; lack of materials; Lack of technology; Lack of community arts partners; Art as private vs. public

**Government and Political:** Political leaders devalue the arts; Local control; Lacking department of education; Leaders not using bully pulpit; Political strife; Union/right to work; Tax restriction; Lacking policy; 'Core' seen as negative

**Competing Education Priorities:** see chart at right

## COMPETING EDUCATION PRIORITIES



## A DECADE OF FEDERAL ARTS IN EDUCATION FUNDING: TRENDS, ANALYSIS, AND THE STORY BEHIND THE FIRST 10 YEARS

The review and dissemination of the trends and analysis of federal arts education granting is intended to uncover the final step in the federal-state-local policy pipeline. The programs described in this report are exemplars for full realization of state level policy put to practice in communities around the nation.

As the only dedicated federal funding source for arts education, the U.S. Department of Education’s Arts in Education (AIE) program (recently renamed “Assistance to Arts Education” program), is charged with “disseminating information about model school-based arts education programs.” Since 2002, Congress has approved about \$448 million for the AIE program, and, of that total, at least \$5 million was targeted for dissemination and evaluation specifically.

The AIE program is dedicated to improving learning in high-poverty schools through the arts. The program is comprised of four key components:

1. Model Development and Dissemination (AEMDD) Grants, which focus on arts integration programs for students.
2. Professional Development for Arts Educators (PDAE) Grants, which develop models to improve the teaching of both arts specialists and general classroom teachers through arts learning strategies.
3. A National Activities Fund, which supports national-level arts education projects, focusing on low-income families and students with disabilities.
4. Evaluation and National Dissemination, which is intended to multiply the impact of this federal investment.

In 2013, Americans for the Arts requested access to the final evaluation reports that the AEMDD and PDAE grantees submitted to the Department of Education. While the grantees completed their reports without intending them as public documents, they became just that—and very valuable ones. Wanting to get a glimpse of what our field might have learned from the AIE program, Americans for the Arts hired an external evaluator, Yael Silk, to analyze about eight large boxes of paperwork from 10 years of the Department’s archives. In total, the evaluator received 148 reports. Given the amount of diversity among the grantees—both in terms of program and evaluation design—the final analysis focused on 84 evaluation reports included in the data set. After a decade and hundreds of organizations participating in these competitive arts education grants, there has been very little national dissemination relating to the successes, and shortcomings, of these efforts.

The report concludes on four major themes, which were present throughout the cases studied:

- Instructional Quality
- Leadership Engagement
- Dissemination
- Grant Impact

These themes help to reinforce the intended outcomes of policy measures supported by advocacy efforts.

However, it was commonplace for grantees to acknowledge that they worked in difficult environments and faced challenges while implementing the programs. A comprehensive, though not necessarily exhaustive, list of these challenges includes:

- Competing priorities at the school sites—whether it be high stakes testing and/or engaging in multiple interventions simultaneously
- Identifying adequate time during the school day
- High stakes testing/NCLB pressures on all staff and students
- Range in teacher ability to effectively manage a classroom for arts learning
- Teacher contract issues coloring the school environment
- Identifying staff and contractors with sufficient expertise and experience (particularly around individualized coaching)
- Disseminating final deliverables (e.g., curriculum) and evaluation findings—suggested more assistance from USDE in the future
- Inadequate physical space and access to materials
- Range in teacher and principal buy-in
- Teachers reporting lack of clarity around lesson planning templates and/or their lesson planning responsibilities
- School mergers, closures
- Mandated scripted curriculum
- Emphasis on assessments that do not measure critical thinking skills
- Economic downturn

## THE HEAT MAP

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The Heat Map was a research initiative to uncover the presence of organizations in states, both in terms of staff and services. This project was intended to help understand who is available to partner, what type of work is already being done, which states have staff/organizational capacity, and which states need more resources. The findings of this work were embedded in the Arts Education Navigator online tool, which is located online, to keep pace with rapid changes in state-level personnel.

Overall, the report concludes with recommendations for the field connecting federal and state policy to local practice and implementation.

A convening hosted by Americans for the Arts at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. in September 2016 on the topic of Title I and the Arts



## STRATEGY 2 FINDINGS

### Networking and Knowledge Sharing

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In 2013, Americans for the Arts partnered with the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network to host a state policy symposium before National Arts Advocacy Day. Attendees included members of State Arts Action Network organizations, Kennedy Center Alliance members, and leaders from State Education Agencies, as well as members of education organizations. In 2014, a similar policy symposium took place in partnership with the Arts Education Partnership. Throughout SP3, regular meetings of the pilot cohort, as well as other leaders from state arts and education sectors, met to discuss policy for the advancement of arts education. Overwhelmingly, attendees at these convenings, both large and small, felt that convening to exchange knowledge was a game changing strategy for their work back home.

Meetings are effective because states are often isolated in their efforts to support arts education. The strategy to share best practices across the states through a national network of arts and education experts was highlighted as a key finding of SP3, allowing states to gain insights from policy experts through in-depth workshops which included reports, case studies, and other tools that they can learn from and replicate in their home state.

With issues ranging from teacher effectiveness and high school graduation requirements to Title I funding and equitable implementation of state policies, the ten states tackled complicated education policy topics throughout the three-year engagement.

From these convenings, **five major policy trends emerged for state-level advocates to pursue:**

### **Sustaining Appropriations for Statewide Initiatives**

Policies are often pursued in concert with appropriations to ensure the implementation is successful. Many states across the nation have ear-marked arts education programs that are operated statewide by the State Arts Agency or other nonprofit organization. Maintaining and sustaining appropriations for the longevity of these programs proved to be a trend among state policy pursuits.

### **Revising K-12 Arts Education Standards**

Policies supportive of revised K-12 arts education standards are essential to the comprehensive delivery of arts education statewide. With the first national model of arts education standards released in 1994, states were scattered with their upkeep of standards until the release of the National Core Arts Standards in 2014. Following their release, many states began pursuing adoption of new, revised arts education standards in alignment with current best practice and up-to-date for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Implementing the Arts Provisions in ESSA**

Policies pursuant to guidance released in tandem with the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015* are one of the strategies to enable states to take full advantage of the arts-friendly provisions included in the new federal law. After its passage in 2015, all states began devising state implementation plans, and many advocacy efforts were initiated to specifically articulate the role of the arts in Titles I, II, IVa, and within the state accountability.

### **Enabling the Title I Policy Pathway**

Policies which articulate the role of the arts as a pathway to achieving the goals of Title I were initiated as a result of SP3 and continue on through multiple states following the leads of California and Arizona. Many states have harnessed the well-articulated pathway utilized by California, to enact new policies or guidance to support funding for local arts programs, which achieve the stated goals of the federal Title I program.

### **Building Infrastructure for Stakeholder Engagement**

Policies which engage a multitude of stakeholders in the implementation of education across a state have been utilized by advocates to specifically advance arts education. If the state lacks infrastructure, many groups have begun to build infrastructure to sustain long-term engagement of stakeholders to serve as a consistent voice for arts education relating to policy development.

## STRATEGY 3 FINDINGS

### Working with States

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Recognizing a diversity of circumstances by which each state operated, there was never a goal to have a uniform approach towards policy development or advocacy infrastructure, but rather to enable the field to learn from the myriad contexts represented by the cohort. An initial recognition of the more obvious differences among states in terms of size of population, governance structure, arts education priorities, and advocacy capacity and infrastructure influenced the goals. However, it was most notable the stark differences among states in their own histories with arts education advocacy and in the degree to which there was a comprehensive foundation for arts education that set a solid platform for policy work.

After three years of work and analysis of the reflective case studies submitted by each state team, **six core advocacy skills were identified which made an influential difference in their work:**



#### Sustaining Core Leadership

Efforts were most successful when lead by steering teams of arts education stakeholders. Teams are often small, usually three to five members—typically representing the state education agency, the state arts council, and one or more advocacy organizations. Greatest success is noted when at least a few individuals in the core leadership group remain consistent over time to help ensure successful integration of new members. Leadership teams should consider broadened support from individuals from government and professional organizations, outside organizations who have needed assets, or former members who carry historical perspective and expertise.



#### Forming Relationships with Coalitions

Efforts were most successful when engaging with others outside of the existing field of arts education. Initiatives that engage in cross-sector partnerships can build allies with key influencers, business coalitions, foundations, grassroots groups, and charter school representatives. Additionally, engaging in statewide networks for education advocacy, like the PTA, or education specific associations, like the state Superintendents association, can help spread the word, reinforce messages, and identify pilot opportunities. As these efforts are underway, teams might consider developing regional arts coalitions which can be organically built through professional relationships through professional development activities.





### **Fostering Allies Among Elected Officials**

Efforts were most successful when advocates remained flexible and adaptable as players change. Changing political contexts imply the need to stay on top of relationship-building with elected officials—although elected officials are critical decision makers, increasingly their tenure can be unpredictable. Whether included in the team or not, legislators and appointed officials can be assets and allies for the work. Utilizing policy opportunities for collaboration can expanded coalitions to reach appointed and elected officials, tapping “VIPs from multiple sectors”, or including legislative leadership.



### **Building an Information Base**

Efforts were most successful when leaders carried out data collection and/or research to inform and promote policy goals. Case-making for advocacy rests in part on a foundation of solid and up-to-date information. Advocates require access to research about the impact of arts education on student success and quality data about the status of arts education, which can be updated easily and regularly. New research should focus areas that task force members identify as priorities, yielding case studies of schools in the state that are delivering high quality arts education and a review of studies about the impact of arts on student performance on measures of college and career readiness.



### **Crafting Consistent and Effective Messages**

Efforts were most successful when leaders acknowledged the need for developing a messaging campaign about the value of arts education. Whether through a communications firm, or in-house, policies can advance through advocacy developed around a systematic creation and launch of a statewide public awareness campaign to promote arts education. Once launched, campaigns flourish by hosting tools for local citizens to use to improve local conditions, gather additional data including public opinion data, and engage additional partners.



### **Creating Communication Infrastructure for Grassroots Advocacy**

Efforts were most successful when teams had the ability to communicate with and mobilize grassroots interests in a timely fashion. Many software options are available, like VoterVoice, which enable groups to mobilize grassroots support to communicate with decision makers as well as the capacity to maintain databases, produce e-newsletters, track responses, and so forth. In some cases, however, Mail Chimp and Facebook approaches bring greater participation.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

Americans for the Arts' overall goal, as related to the State Policy Pilot Program and any outgrowths of the work, is to establish successful systems which empower state-level stakeholders to influence arts education policy development and to lead advocacy initiatives. That said, there are several ways in which the field could benefit from reformed programming and greater connections to enable this work nation-wide.

From this three-year initiative, it is necessary for the field to maintain open lines of communication—or networking—to foster continuous **knowledge sharing** across states and nationwide. The communication opportunities to peers is essential to continue learning from the endeavors of other states, especially in a time where education policy is largely at the hands of state leaders.



The final convening of the State Policy Pilot Program team leaders in Washington, D.C. in March 2017

**Articulating policy pathways** and testing proofs-of-concept is essential for states to enact aligned frameworks in federal-state-local-pipelines. Sharing the opportunities for states from federal laws and guidance is a start, but further sharing information when a state employs the strategy for others to learn from is essential.

**Communicating impact** to others in the education sector will be key. To share information with education sector stakeholders will help clear the way for advocates in other states to move policy forward.

Continuous **technical assistance** from a national perspective has always been the role of Americans for the Arts, and will continue to be. Fostering networks, communicating impact, and providing research and analysis broadly speaking is our role, but more concretely helping leaders build capacity and inculcate initiatives is a strength.

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