



Research-Based Communication

TOOL KIT

Introduction and Table of Contents

Return to [Tool kit home page](#)

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DEAR MANAGERS OF STATE ARTS AGENCY EDUCATION PROGRAMS:

Increasingly, scientifically-based research findings are becoming the basis for our policy and program decisions and a centerpiece in our efforts to persuade and educate a number of different publics regarding the importance for children and youth of learning in and through the arts. Knowing that state arts agency education managers often do not have the luxury of time to locate and review pages of research before making a decision or creating various advocacy communications, we hope that you will find the enclosed Tool Kit helpful in your work.

This Tool Kit is meant to provide a research and communications framework that can be used quickly and effectively. State arts agency education managers from around the country have used the research and talking points outlined here to create a variety of examples of research-based communications. This diverse sampling illustrates how we can use the same research to address various policy issues, depending on the values of the community and the particular issues we are addressing.

If you wish to read further about how this Tool Kit came to be, or want further help with incorporating research into your work, we suggest reading “*An Introduction to Scientifically-Based Research*,” a monograph commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts and National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and co-authored by Debra Ingram and Michael Sikes. The monograph was part of a professional development initiative to help us as arts education managers meet the ever increasing demands of our work. Reflection on that publication led to this Tool Kit. The monograph is a wonderful companion piece to the Tool Kit, and we urge you to review it if you find yourself needing to use research on a regular basis and/or wishing to renew your skills in using research effectively.

For feedback on the Tool Kit, please contact: Mary Campbell-Zopf or Sherry Brown. We would love to know in what ways it supported you, our valuable peer, in the work we all share. We also would welcome suggestions for improvement.

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Table of Contents

Introduction..... 1

Section I

The Arts and the Creative Workforce 3

Information Sheet

The Arts and the Creative Workforce 4

Annotated Bibliography

The Arts and the Creative Workforce 5

Samples

The Arts and the Creative Workforce 9

 Short Newsletter Articles 9

 Letter to the Editor
 (tailored to a local context) 10

 Article for a State Context 11

 Making the Case in Wyoming 15

 Testimony to Legislators 15

 Short Advocacy Piece 16

 Workforce Skills and the Arts 18

 Making a Case for the Arts and
 Workforce Development..... 49

Arts Facts to Go

The Arts and the Creative Workforce 50

Section II

The Arts and Literacy Development..... 51

Information Sheet

The Arts and Literacy Development 53

Annotated Bibliography

The Arts and Literacy Development 54

Samples

The Arts and Literacy Development

 Brief Newsletter Article 58

 Article for Parent or Citizen Newsletter 59

Arts Facts to Go

The Arts and Literacy Development 60

Section III

The Arts, Cognition, and Social Development..... 61

Information Sheet

The Arts, Cognition, and Social Development 63

Annotated Bibliography

The Arts, Cognition, and Social Development 65

Samples

The Arts, Cognition, and Social Development 70

 Newsletter Article 70

 Letter to the Superintendent..... 70

 Testimony to Legislators 73

Arts Facts to Go –

The Arts, Cognition, and Social Development 75

Introduction

Significant research over the last decade has built a strong case for the value of arts learning. Major summaries, including *Schools, Communities, and the Arts* (1995); *Champions of Change* (2000); *The Arts in Education: Evaluating the Evidence for a Causal Link* (2000); *Critical Links* (2002); and now *Critical Evidence: How the Arts Benefit Student Achievement* (2006), have focused serious attention on researchable questions regarding arts learning. These summaries represent a mass of incremental evidence confirming that the arts develop valuable, even essential intellectual and academic skills, as well as other positive attributes. Some of those summaries, along with the works of individual scholars, also have provoked controversy about what we know—actually a healthy sign in any discipline.

Daily, arts administrators at the state and local levels must make sense of and apply research to their work. Several years ago, the NASAA Arts Education Advisory Committee identified a common interest in learning more about scientific research and its influence on educational policy, which led to the development of the monograph *An Introduction to Scientifically-Based Research*.¹ Following publication of the monograph, the Advisory Committee decided to explore how to disseminate information based on the ever-increasing body of research related to arts learning.

To accomplish this task, the Monograph Extension Sub-Committee was formed and charged with developing several concrete advocacy examples based on the information found in a section of the monograph “*Disseminating Research: A Planning Guide*.”

This Tool Kit brings together several components that advocates at state and local levels can use in crafting individualized messages for specific audiences and local contexts. Components are research-based, drawing on careful reviews and analyses of research literature that confirm, explain, and clarify the role of the arts in various significant policy contexts. The materials in the Tool Kit are meant to be “boilerplate” to some extent so that arts advocates can adapt them to their contexts and needs, quickly creating targeted, personalized advocacy messages. For instance, SAA professionals will find it easy to add relevant state arts data from grant-making and state education initiatives.

KEY AREAS OF EMPHASIS

Based on responses from the Arts Education Advisory Committee, the Sub-Committee for Monograph Extension outlined a basic format that can be re-used for various topics. The current emphasis, based on widespread interest and relevance to policy discussions, consists of the following policy areas:

- The arts and the creative workforce
- The arts and literacy development
- The arts, cognition, and social development

Future versions of the Tool Kit will explore additional policy areas, based upon expressed needs of stakeholders.

¹ Ingram, D. & Sikes, M. (2005). *An introduction to scientifically-based research*. Washington, D.C.: National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. http://www.nasaa-arts.org/publications/arts_ed_monograph.pdf

Explanation of Components

Each section of the Tool Kit consists of four major components.

An Information Sheet

The Information Sheet is a set of bulleted talking points that provides the raw material for crafting targeted messages to identified stakeholders.

An Annotated Bibliography

The Annotated Bibliography reflects the substantive and scholarly data base from which the Information Sheet is drawn. Each bibliography was designed to be a representative sample of recent and current research findings. The Ohio Arts Council developed each bibliography in partnership with interns from The Ohio State University and with guidance from the Sub-Committee for Monograph Extension and education consultant Michael Sikes. National-level research scholars have reviewed the bibliography for representation, inclusion, and balance.

Each bibliography draws from a variety of sources, including:

- Research compilations, such as *Critical Evidence: How the Arts Benefit Student Achievement, Champions of Change, and Critical Links*
- Original research from peer reviewed publications, including books from mainstream educational publishers (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Jossey-Bass, Teachers College Press, etc.) and journals published by major educational or research organizations (e.g., *Studies in Art Education from the National Art Education Association and Educational Leadership* from ASCD)
- Advocacy and policy documents that reflect and are based on research
- Press coverage that summarizes research

Sample Messages

Sample Messages derived from the Information Sheet and the Annotated Bibliography and presented in different formats that target particular audiences or contexts: a press release, a newsletter article, a letter to the editor, etc. Arts advocates can personalize these messages for their specific contexts and audiences.

Art Facts to Go

Concise statements about the value of arts learning to carry with you.

