

Press Release

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Governors Association Recognizes Arts Education as Significant in Creating the 21st Century Workforce



Washington, D.C.—Arts education is a cost-effective way to help build the workforce of tomorrow, according to an issue brief produced by the National Governors Association (NGA). The report, *The Impact of Arts Education on Workforce Preparation*, provides examples of how arts-based education can build skills, increase academic success and lower the incidence of juvenile crime. It offers examples from states that are already using the arts in education and after-school programs, as well as policy recommendations for states looking for innovative and cost-effective ways to produce successful students and productive employees.

Prepared by the NGA's Center for Best Practices, which provides governors with innovative ideas and examples of excellence in state government, the issue brief addresses one of the key issues for states: the importance of human capital to an area's economic vitality. According to the report, today's challenging workplace demands academic credentials as well as less tangible assets—including flexibility, highly developed interpersonal skills and problem-solving ability.

“A creative approach to learning improves performance in the classroom and builds the self-esteem of our children. If you look into the faces of children who are involved in a creative activity, you will see their enthusiasm for learning and their pride in being part of a creative experience,” said Alabama Governor Don Siegelman, chair of NGA's Economic Development and Commerce Committee. “For states to be competitive, an educated and well-trained workforce is a primary ingredient for a vibrant economy. Research suggests that education in the arts provides a distinct advantage, reinforcing multiple skills that connect learning to real work.”

The report cites multiple research studies showing the positive effects of arts education on student learning, school attendance, communications abilities and higher-order thinking skills. “The NGA brief underscores the positive effect that arts education can have on preparing children and youth for success in the workforce,” said Eileen B. Mason, acting chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. “In addition to contributing to cognitive, emotional, and social development, participation in the arts gives children an appreciation for the skill, discipline, and sacrifice necessary for achievement.”

(more)

The brief includes of examples of how states benefit from enhanced workforce readiness, as a result of having provided arts instruction to students. For instance, New York’s Empire State Partnership uses the arts not only to enliven the teaching of other disciplines, but also to put the students’ skills to work with professionals outside the classroom in developing community projects. Research cited in the brief also shows how the arts contribute to lower recidivism rates, increased self-esteem and the acquisition of job skills in at-risk populations.

“Governors and states have been extremely innovative in using the arts to meet their state’s educational goals. The arts are a proven solution in creating a learning environment that engages students, including those who are at risk, and prepares them to be productive participants in tomorrow’s economy,” says Jonathan Katz, CEO of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies.

Among the policy actions for governors recommended by the brief are the following:

- Include arts education as an element of comprehensive education reform legislation.
- Facilitate the interaction between governors’ education policy advisors, economic development leaders and school leadership—especially in those areas with high numbers of at-risk youth. A state’s top arts and culture officers can act as resources in these interactions.
- Leverage the willingness of the private sector to contribute to the arts by providing seed funding and starter grants to innovative arts-based education programs.

The policy brief is the second in a series on best practices that demonstrate the value of the arts as policy tool in economic development, produced through a cooperative agreement between the National Governors Association and the National Endowment for the Arts, with assistance from the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies.

The National Governors Association, founded in 1908, is the instrument through which the nation’s governors collectively influence the development and implementation of national policy and apply creative leadership to state issues. Its members are the governors of the 50 states, three territories and two commonwealths. For more information about the National Governors Association, visit <http://www.nga.org/>.

The National Endowment for the Arts provides national recognition and support to significant projects of artistic excellence, thus preserving and enhancing our nation’s diverse cultural heritage. The arts endowment was created by Congress and established in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. Since then, it has awarded more than 117,000 grants to arts organizations and artists in all fifty states and the six U.S. jurisdictions. This public investment in the nation’s cultural life has resulted in both new and classic works of art reaching every corner of America. For more information about the National Endowment for the Arts, visit the agency’s Web site at www.arts.gov.

The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies is the membership organization of the nation’s state and jurisdictional arts agencies. NASAA’s mission is to advance and promote a meaningful role for the arts in the lives of individuals, families and communities throughout the United States. To learn more about the role of state arts agencies and their programs, go to NASAA’s Web site at <http://www.nasaa-arts.org>

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