

**Assembly 2007 Baltimore, Maryland  
Peer Session Notes**

**Assistant/Deputy Directors**

**December 6 & 8, 2007**

**Co-Chairs: Lionell Thomas, Foster Billingsley**

“Keeping the train running in order and on time” appeared to be the prevailing sentiment among the Assistant/Deputy Directors. The peer group sessions were two days of informative and inviting dialogue around the central theme leadership. The sessions provided an opportunity for the Assistant/Deputy Directors to have a mutual learning experience in order to share “best practices” and new management strategies with their colleagues. Co-facilitated by consultants Judy Brown from the University of Maryland and John McCann from the Virginia Tech, the following topics guided the sessions:

- Leadership as a practice, and not a position.
- Leadership versus effective management.
- Leading without positional authority.
- What one does as an agent of change?

The discussions highlighted the role of the Assistant/Deputy Directors as leaders within the arts councils, as they varied from state to state. While a major portion of the discussions was very focused on being an agent of change, there was support for the notion that the Assistant/Deputy Directors need to be “balancers” and judicious in managing their job responsibilities. The group discussed the issues of maintaining integrity and trust within the councils, noting the importance of the public value of the arts. There was dialogue around the outside internal and external pressures that influence day-to-day decisions. The group talked briefly about the inner fears of being a leader and underscored the significance of understanding the power of thinking and mindset to how we see things.

Notwithstanding, there was a real willingness to help one another as we look to the future in the development of future activities for the group. The group voted to require that the co-chair of the group commit to two years in order to ensure continuity. Lionell Thomas of the District of Columbia and Jaime Dempsey of Arizona were selected to serve as the co-chairs for the Assistant/Deputy Directors peer group. We would like to acknowledge Foster Billingsley of Virginia for co-chairing the group the past three years.