



Models of Influence

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I've been thinking a lot recently about the factors that make movements succeed or fail—movements like Occupy, like the environmental movement, and the wear seatbelts campaign. The factors I looked at included clarity of goals and indicators, imagery and sensory impact, exposure of the opposition, the ability to attract commercial support, and the coordination of media and mega-events. It would be interesting to consider how the factors I just mentioned could be managed to the advantage of an arts education movement. But when you invited me to discuss "models of influence," I used a little different approach. I imagined I was a consultant to the movement to make a quality arts education basic in the learning of every American child—not just to get lots of people to say it should be so, or to agree on language that says it is so, but to make it so. I'll focus on three factors critical to increasing influence: an effective infrastructure, purposeful policy entrepreneurship, and a strategically designed program agenda.

Since I want to appear presidential in this political season, my first task is to lower your expectations, so let me tell you I've focused on asking questions, in the hope that you, the real experts, have or will develop the answers.

Factor I. Effective Infrastructure

What does effective infrastructure mean for the arts education movement?

"Infrastructure" is, of course, a metaphor borrowed from the transportation industry and refers to bridges, tunnels, railways and roads, but now we use it for networks connecting and routes through all kinds of spaces and systems—cyberspace, for instance. For arts education, an effective infrastructure has to mean at least the following three things:

- a strategic forum where arts leaders, education leaders and other interests with a stake in quality arts education assemble to articulate their mission and vision, and establish priorities for policy and program;
- a clearinghouse for learning about arts education—what its value and benefits are, what policies and practices produce those benefits;
- ways that information is communicated between the strategic forum and learning network with education policymakers. There needs to be a connection between the policy forum, the collection of best practices, and the advocacy machine.

The public education system in the United States is an extreme example of decentralization. Critical policies are decided and resources are allocated at the federal, state and local levels. Therefore, infrastructure effective in the three ways I've mentioned—strategic forum, best practice clearinghouse, and influencing policymakers—will have to be in place at each governmental level.

We see that the Arts Education Partnership is structured to leverage influence at the three governmental levels. The four governing entities include the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the U.S. Department of Education at the federal level as funding partners, NASAA and the Council of Chief State School Officers, representing state government leadership as managing partners. Then the partners include more than a hundred other stakeholders representing arts, education, foundation, civic and business interests.

There's a perfect logic in having the first presentation after this keynote illustrate a strong partnership between a state department of education and a state arts agency. That connection plus the citizen stakeholders such as statewide alliances, Young Audience chapters, VSA Arts groups and others provides the infrastructure necessary to advance art education in a state. I think it's a very good thing that the NEA is encouraging collaboration between the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education (SEADAE) and state arts agency arts education managers.

At the local level, the necessary infrastructure to advance arts education is explained very clearly in [Gaining the Arts Advantage](#). After reviewing 300 school districts, and focusing on 90 of them with the strongest arts education programs, the authors identified 13 key factors. Half a dozen are people in influential roles such as president of the school board, superintendent, a cadre of principals, PTA or PTO leader. Another half dozen factors are aspects of reflective practice such as attention to national and state policies and standards, assessment of learning, and availability of professional development for teachers. The most critical factor of all, though, is "a community actively engaged in the arts politics and instructional programs of the district," because the superintendent or principal or teacher who thinks the arts can transform students and schools still needs understanding and ongoing support from their authorizers to make the necessary curricular, administrative and instructional investments.

Your role in sustaining infrastructure at all levels is very important, particularly your role in fostering a learning network at the state level. With a learning network at

the state level, whatever each school, district and community succeeds at or fails at becomes the collective knowledge of everyone engaged in advancing arts education. Without state level infrastructure, best practices remain isolated, knowledge is lost when individuals move on and failures may be repeated.

Factor II. Successful Policy Entrepreneurship

What is successful policy entrepreneurship and what does it mean for arts education?

Policy entrepreneurship means adding to the influence of your cause by positioning it to benefit from the influence of another cause, especially a more powerful cause or one that offers a time-sensitive threat or opportunity. In a general sense, those of us working in cultural policy are constant policy entrepreneurs, demonstrating that we provide public benefits in trade relations, economic development, place making and tourism, health and creative aging, youth asset development, and other fields where the public investment is large.

In arts education, policy entrepreneurship means making the case that learning in the arts makes a significant contribution to achieving top-priority education policy goals, significant enough to claim inclusion in proposals for the big money categories such as Title 1, Title II, Race to the Top and Investing in Innovation (i3) grants. It also means positioning learning in the arts to gain from, not be marginalized by, big education policy initiatives such as STEM and the Common Core State Standards. How do we have to be organized and what do we have to do?

- For instance, regarding Title I funds, what goals are realistic; what research; what project evaluation; what communication with which federal, state and local education officials; what education of which lawmakers; what coalition of stakeholders; and what organizing network will it take to move the needle on inclusion of arts learning in Title I–funded activities? Some states have effectively built on an example of one district's success using Title I funds for the arts and have taken that approach statewide. How have they done that and how could other states and districts do something similar?
- Given the massive promotion of the STEM concept, what policy and funding goals for integrating the arts in this learning are realistic? When a school district in Hamilton County, Tennessee, creates a problem-based learning curriculum with a focus on science, technology, engineering, the arts, mathematics, and medicine (STEAM²) and partners with colleges and regional businesses to provide internships and apprenticeships, how can evaluation and dissemination of the results influence curriculum design and resource allocation in another school district somewhere else in the country?

The logic of clustering STEM learning without an arts learning emphasis is stunningly flawed. The very essence of STEM learning—the scientific

method—begins with observation. Artistic skills are integral in brainstorming hypotheses and designing experiments, solving problems and the innovative application of knowledge.

The business world overwhelmingly perceives artistic skills as integral in realizing the potential of its STEM workers and STEM tasks. Anyone who reviews the [skills map](#) developed by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills would perceive how integral arts learning is to applying STEM knowledge in school and work. Bob Lutz, former CEO of General Motors, who addressed NASAA at our national conference in Detroit, has said, "A car is an exciting mobile sculpture that you want to own, drive and be seen in. That's why [auto-industry] comeback stories are always design-driven." The three areas that youth interested in information technology—the T in STEM—most desire to work in are design of video games, design of mobile phone apps, and design of web pages.

What we need to ask is what communication at the federal, state and local levels between what decision makers and what network of stakeholders will it take to reconnect the reality of STEAM in learning and in the workplace with the policies supporting STEM in schools?

- We know that 46 states including the District of Columbia are committed to some combination of the new [Core Curriculum State Standards for English Language Arts and for Mathematics](#). Have you read these on-line? It's great that they are so easily available. In the case of English, the literature standards cover extensively the elements, reading, analysis and criticism of creative writing and nonfiction. Language and writing standards do include the development of skills narrating real or imagined events. However, you would be hard-pressed to find guidance for students writing poetry, drama or any fictional form. The mathematics standards, because of attention to skills related to line, shapes, geometric forms, symmetry, and other visual and spatial concepts, are, I think, at least as suggestive of opportunity to draw upon and build creative artistic skills as the English standards are. Certainly, teachers of English, mathematics and the arts can cultivate creative skills in all these subject areas as they implement these standards. They can use movement, sound, drama, object-based learning and other imagery to reach students with diverse sensory abilities and preferences. To do so, however, they will have to bring much of the motivation for this themselves, they will have to be creative and resourceful, they will need to invest a great deal of time in planning their own classes and collaborating with other teachers, and their school may not trace the results to their efforts, or even value some of the most important results.

From the perspective of policy entrepreneurship, how can the implementation of the Common Core State Standards be related to learning in the arts so that all together learning in English, mathematics and the arts is improved? In what form would influence have to be exerted at the state level, and at the district and school levels? How can the availability of the newly updated

fine arts standards, including media arts, be helpful in this process?

Who has the expertise to address these questions; the reach to inform the people who have committed their states, districts and schools to the new standards; and the influence to energize such a movement? You see what I'm asking—are we talking with the right people in the right forums with the right rationales and the right coalition of supporters to advance learning in the arts and not be marginalized as decisions are made about how the Common Core State Standards in English and mathematics will be implemented. How can we help SEADAE and the College Board, who are active in this process?

Factor III. A Strategic Agenda Designed to Unite Support and Attract Investment

What I've observed is that the arts learning movement advances when stakeholders adopt a two-part action agenda. The first part gathers baseline evidence of the areas that need improvement and the second part addresses the needs programmatically. NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman announced at the recent Arts Education Partnership national forum in Chattanooga, Tennessee, that the arts endowment will be playing a leadership role in assessing the availability of arts education nationwide. Knowing where arts education is and isn't available will provide basic information necessary for designing approaches to fill the gaps. Several states have mapped the availability of arts education and that has enabled them to approach arts education not only as an educational issue, but as an issue of equity.

Following from research findings that demonstrably better teaching results in demonstrably better learning, an important second basic agenda item is a mapping of the quality of arts learning instruction available—a look at who is delivering arts instruction, their level of preparation and credentialing, as well as the availability of professional development and other resources that improve teaching. A third set of baseline data includes an assessment of what students are learning, how they stack up against expected grade-level proficiency, how what they know and are able to do is trending, how they benchmark compared to similar student cohorts, and what factors are influencing their achievement level.

The value of these three arts education data sets—accessibility, quality and achievement—is that they guide you to program goals whose educational need and whose grounding in equity issues has been clearly demonstrated.

The second stage of agenda design answers the question: What programs can most strategically address your state's needs? State arts agencies invest a very large portion of their resources in arts education. In 2011, they awarded more than 9,000 grants totaling more than \$67 million in more than 2,900 communities. That's 42% of all their awards and 30% of all their dollars. I know that you study each other's approaches, that you have a very active learning network via your

listserv, that [each state's arts education program](#) is outlined on the NASAA website, and that program design is not a focus of this professional development institute or your peer session. But I would like to share one suggestion that might increase our influence.

It is to see what happens when you connect a cost/benefit analysis of your arts education program agenda to the idea of taking programs to scale. To describe an arts education program in cost/benefit terms, go through the exercise of articulating the many separate benefits that your program produces, such as students reached, partnerships established, parents engaged, drop-outs avoided, skills learned, schools transformed. Consider both outputs (activities, participants, aspects of process) and outcomes (changes, results, achievement of learning objectives). What is the price of each program activity when you add up the dollars you grant, contract with, and expend on services? Looking at the benefits you get from various program activities, which are your most effective and efficient programs?

Let's take Poetry Out Loud as an example. The Poetry Foundation invests half a million, the NEA grants roughly a million dollars to states and let's say it spends another half million on staff, materials and other aspects of program support. The state arts agencies more than match the NEA grants, but, to keep this exercise simple, let's just say we're looking at a \$3 million program. We know that 365,000 young people participated. And we know that aspects of that participation were reading a book of hundreds of poems, selecting favorites to memorize, rehearsing and performing, and, over the school year, engaging with teachers, family, and other participants. If you wanted to express what this program produces in terms of hours of learning, you could calculate the hours a typical student invests and multiply that by 365,000. You could add up the parental time commitment to the students and the school, the numbers of schools, the audiences at the recitations. The most obvious cost/benefit ratio is what you get when you divide the investment by the participating students, and you get a school-year-long immersion in complex language and communication skills for \$8 a student.

Another advantage of this habit of mind is that it makes explicit how partnerships leverage investments and yield huge payoffs for the partners. The Poetry Foundation gets a \$3 million program that engages 365,000 young people for only half a million dollars. See, it's leveraging its investment five times over. Each participant only costs The Poetry Foundation about a dollar and a quarter. The NEA gets the impact of twice as much as its investment and the state arts agencies get a return on a program triple the size of their investment. This is one lens I look through on behalf of NASAA. Each participant costs us a bit more than two and half dollars. When we talk to our authorizers, we can share, not only an incredibly effective program, in that we can demonstrate the deep skills our young people develop, but an incredibly efficient program as well, in terms of an enormous effort so highly leveraged by collaboration and economy of scale, that it costs each partner very little per participant.

After you take an initial look at the cost/benefit analysis of your own programs, ask what it would cost to take each program to scale and realize completely the benefit that you seek for your state. What portion of the state's population would be "saturation" for a particular program activity? Is the program strategy you currently administer capable of completely realizing the benefit you seek? Is there another strategy that can more efficiently or more effectively realize the maximum benefit?

What this method does is put you in a position to make the value case for program budget levels based on the best possible return on investment for specific public benefits. This process also puts you in a position to ask who else has a stake in the benefit you seek. What public, private, and commercial interests or individuals could be partners or allies? Through what process can the possibility of increased investment be explored? What we would like to be able to do is to explain to our authorizers that for a specific budget increment they can get a specific jump in benefits—in people or organizations or communities reached, in numbers of events or quality of experience, in jobs maintained or created. Also, it's nice to be able to explain the cost and level of benefits that fulfills a particular program goal. Authorizers are right to be wary of programs that don't have finite objectives, for which they don't know how much money will be enough.

I'm reminded that Bill Ivey, when he chaired the NEA, asked the national service organizations representing the performing, visual and literary arts, museums, state and local arts agencies, and others how their fields were likely to use additional money should there be an increase in the budget of the NEA. NASAA polled the state arts agencies to get our response. The information Ivey got enabled him to present Congress with numbers and kinds of activities the NEA budget could stimulate with an increase. That was the turnaround year, when, after Congress had reduced the NEA budget from \$176 million down to \$98 million, they raised it to \$105 million and began the climb back. We call that having "an advocate's budget," one where the funds are clearly linked to a level of benefits.

So those are some models of influence for your consideration—strengthening infrastructure, practicing policy entrepreneurship and designing programs for return on investment that can be taken to scale. I hope these ideas are helpful as you explore state-level partnerships, look at the bigger picture from a national perspective, consider regional viewpoints, craft stories, get an update on the Common Core State Standards, reflect on messages and practice mind mapping. I welcome your feedback, questions and suggestions any time you have them.

On behalf of NASAA, I want to thank the NEA for its investment over more than 20 years in the professional development of state arts agency arts education managers.