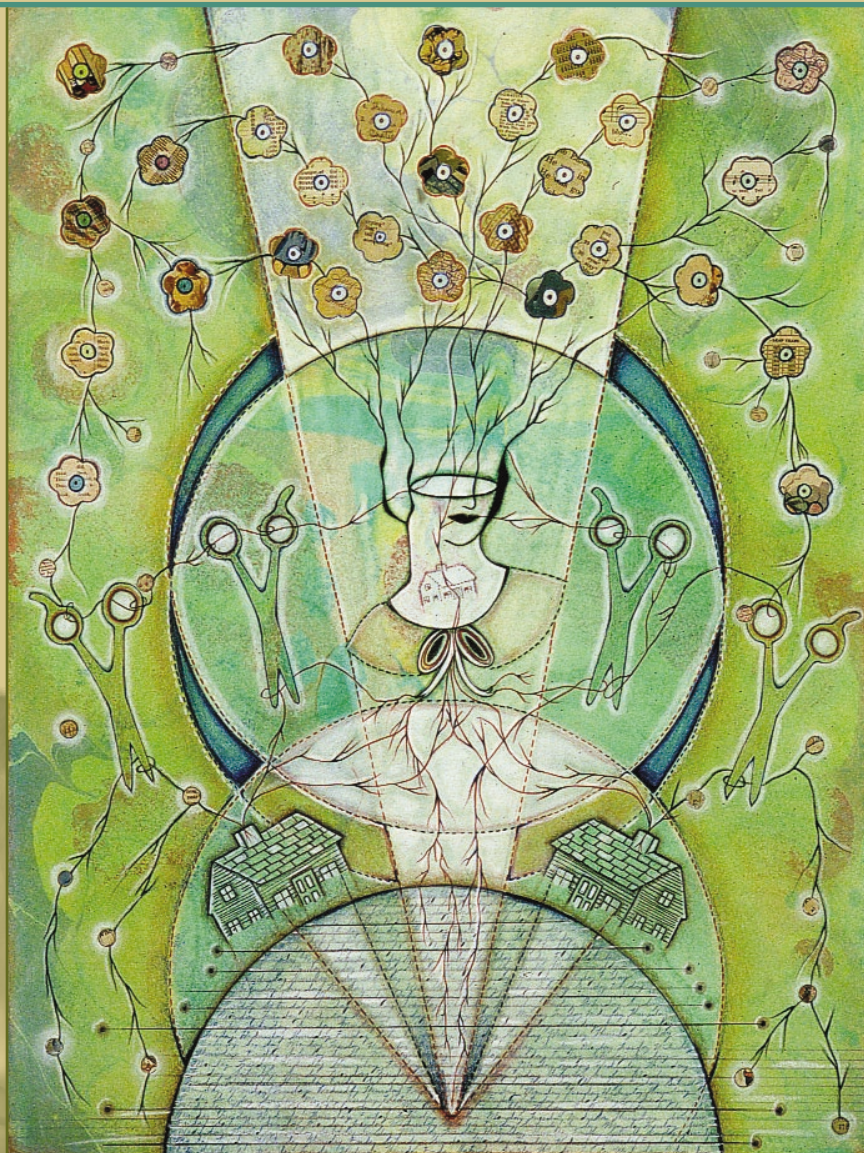


*A Needs Assessment for the Tennessee Arts Commission*



# Ready, Set, Grow

Cultivating Arts Education Reform



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## **Cultivating Arts Education Reform**

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*A Needs Assessment for the Tennessee Arts Commission*

A project of the Arts Education Program—Kim Leavitt, Director



*February 28, 2005*

*By Dawn M. Ellis, Dawn M. Ellis and Associates*

Thank you to Rich Boyd, Kim Leavitt, and all the Tennessee Arts Commission staff who participated so fully in this investigation; to Marv Klassen-Landis and Roya Haider, an integral part of the research team; and to Johanna Mises Boyer, for her sharp eyes. Thanks to all the individuals who participated in focus groups, meetings, interviews, and visits and generously went to work trying to build a stronger arts learning sector. Finally, many thanks to my husband John, and sons Miles and Theodore, for understanding why this investigation was so important.

—Dawn M. Ellis

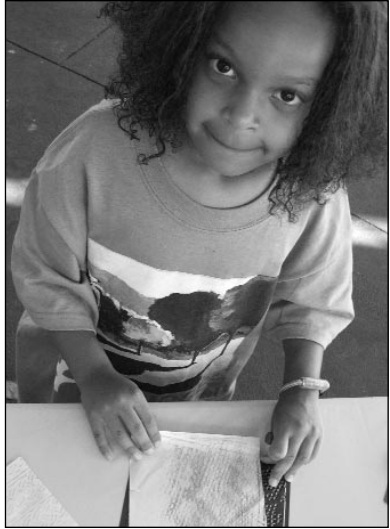
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ASSOCIATION FOR VISUAL ARTISTS—CHATTANOOGA

# Purpose

Learning and the arts—together they can form a powerful combination that brings us the artistic voices of the future. But, learning in and through the arts can also shape people and communities in other ways.

The following report arises from hopes and needs expressed by Tennesseans who would like to strengthen the various forms of arts education. Using research techniques, we share priorities, themes and advice that arise from their voices. As you, the Tennessee Arts Commission, strengthen your work in arts education, this synthesis offers guidance from the field on:

- Vision and Goals
- Barriers, Needs and Opportunities
- Other Key Players
- Priorities for the Commission

From March 2004 through February 2005, Dawn M. Ellis and Associates (DME) collaborated with the Tennessee Arts Commission (“the Commission”) to explore how to improve its arts-in-education/arts education programs and services. Commission staff worked closely with DME almost as co-researchers; they were integral to the investigation. As outsiders, DME analyzed the data methodically, sharing perspectives, identifying themes and making recommendations along the way and in this report. We also contextualized the results based on our expertise and national experience. We thank the tireless Commission staff and the sincere, energized and thoughtful residents of Tennessee who participated in this study. This is your work.







# What would it look like if we succeed?

## ENVISION THE FUTURE

Before you decide what you should do, you have to know where you're headed. We asked people to think big and paint us a picture of how arts and learning would look in Tennessee in five years given an ideal world. How heartening to find a generous vision around learning and the arts!

### *Depth*

Teachers, arts organizations and artists insisted that all students have access to sequential arts education taught by arts specialists. Dance and theatre would no longer be the “little sibling” subjects, but would be widely available and of high quality.

Learning would be looked at in the long term: years instead of days, and skills and disciplines that last a lifetime. They saw the next generations of Tennessee artists, artisans, arts teachers, audiences and scholars. Instead of isolation, emerging and seasoned professionals would find connection and community. Growth and learning would not stop at the school door.

## Coherence

That spark we call learning—and its attendant fire—light up our minds and hearts. The opportunity to learn in or through the arts happens in schools and community centers, in homes and performance centers. What if we could connect those learning opportunities so they were more coherent? So people seeking learning opportunities could find them; and students could flow between learning in school and building on what they learn with their families? The university student directing Ibsen for the first time, the kindergartner discovering red and blue make purple, the artist acquiring a new technique, the grandson working with grandpa to figure out the harmonica are all learners. In the ideal world, families learn together. Institutions and services support these diverse learners by lifting and connecting them to the next level of learning, wherever it is found.

“Honor the arts and learning that happens beyond institutions,” the field reminded us. Many pictured current boundaries becoming less relevant, so that learning, no matter where it happens, is valued. The arts of “regular folk” would be relevant to cultural institutions. The arts of cultural institutions would be available and part of the everyday life of regular folk. Learning the arts of many cultures would help bridge divides among community members. One focus group participant explains, “We also need the arts to be integrated and a part of everyone’s daily life. It’s that way in some cultures but not in ours.”

With coherence throughout learning and arts opportunities, we would embrace a larger concept of arts learning; one not divided into organizational silos.

*I do think that to the extent one brings...arts into the schools,...it's not just working with schools, but teachers. Then partnerships between schools, artists, and the community could drastically impact the quality of life. Because it's not just about learning,...it's about how a community thrives. It creates space for celebration within the community and across cultures.*

SUPERINTENDENT,  
WEST TENNESSEE

## Involvement

Not-for-profit arts organizations envisioned small rural schools being able to learn from high quality art collections and performances: provide access for all students; for all families, we heard. Across the spectrum, people spoke of their desire for the arts world to be involved with a more varied public. Inclusion. Outreach. People of all walks of life would participate in arts and learning, and celebrate it.

## UNIFY THE LARGER SECTOR

The Commission plans to strengthen its work in *arts education*, but the term means different things to different people. As we listened, we began to see the need for the Commission’s leadership in a larger conceptualization of arts education, something we call *arts learning*. Within this larger *learning and the arts* sector,

include the larger intersection of ‘arts’ broadly defined, and education—both informal and formal. Include the various ways Tennesseans learn to do the arts, and understand and experience the arts. Include educational work that uses arts techniques to learn in other subject areas. Embrace the various journeys taken by professional artists and artisans involved in both the not-for-profit and for-profit sectors.

Do not limit your leadership to one brand or one model because the learners do not. *Imagine this young musician. For years, she has studied private classical piano lessons from a local teacher, while teaching herself to play by ear. Her impeccable technique helps her win the spot in her high school’s jazz band. The music theory she learns in school helps her write songs for her own band, which performs a mix of blues, rock and country. While in college, she learns to use software simplifying music composition. Every weekend that she doesn’t play with her band, she’s out listening to music wherever she can: from bars to festivals and lunchtime performance series. One band member from a popular local country band explains to her how networking works. College connections lead to an internship with the record industry that help give her the confidence to move to Nashville to pursue a musical career when she graduates. She picks up pieces along the way that help her build her larger artistic self: some in school; some in the community; some all on her own.*

Expand your concept of this learning and the arts sector. To improve communication, comprehension and respect among all constituents, the field encourages you to help them develop a shared terminology honoring the different types of arts learning. Let *arts learning* include:

### ***Education: Skill Development***

- SEQUENTIAL ARTS EDUCATION (e.g., sequential, long term development of arts skills in schools from early education through universities, community school arts programs, providers of private lessons).
- ARTS INTEGRATION (e.g., learning other skills, subjects and abilities through the arts).
- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (emerging and practicing professionals continuing education in arts-related areas.)

### ***Learning to Strengthen Communities and Understanding***

- ARTS EXPOSURE AND INTRODUCTION (e.g., arts-in-education, Single Ticket Subsidy program, touring to schools, festival workshops, visits to cultural institutions).
- SOCIAL SERVICES AND THE ARTS (e.g., youth work, families-based, arts and therapy)
- LEARNING IN CULTURAL CONTEXTS (e.g., learning arts skills and practices as part of life, heritage and family whether yours or someone else’s)

Work with partners old and new to hone this conceptualization, since it should be responsive to the ways Tennessee communities are evolving. Because of limited resources, you may only choose to support parts of this sector with funding; support as diversely as you can. But, be sure to provide services and leadership to all of it. Otherwise, the funding may serve to divide rather than to build learning opportunities; and the advocacy message about arts education becomes confused rather than unified.





# Recommendations

The Tennessee Arts Commission has a unique leadership role to play in the state of Tennessee. This was made clear by the field when we asked them to share their needs, barriers, opportunities and allies, and to prioritize what the Commission could do to help move them toward their vision. To this wealth of advice, DME brings an outside eye and knowledge of promising practices elsewhere. Consider the following as you develop your education plan.

## CATALYZE THE NETWORK

Develop ways to help Tennessee professionals and residents involved in learning and the arts connect with each other in substantial, meaningful ways. If successful, you reap three potential benefits:

- The sector learns from itself to improve practice.
- The Commission develops more comprehensive and coordinated approaches to improve services.
- The field can more quickly mobilize as a whole to help each other with advocacy.

With the right communication systems in place and the right leadership in the field, an engaged network can be quickly mobilized to demonstrate the power of learning in and through the arts.

### ***1. Spearhead a formal body representing the statewide network***

Work with the Tennessee Department of Education and other partners to create a formal statewide coalition that links together the various sectors involved in learning and the arts and culture. Strive to secure

representation by the highest-level officials possible, so you involve people who can make decisions. This way, ideas are not only generated, but can be easily implemented. Possible participants include representatives from:

- artist and artisan unions
- arts and disability awareness organizations
- arts specialists, teachers, and education administrators
- educator service organizations
- commerce department—folklore and historical societies
- health and human services
- state department of education
- parks and recreation
- parent organizations
- higher education
- service organizations
- state humanities council
- youth organizations

Also include individuals (artists, scholars, young people, etc.) in the field particularly adept at thinking across sectors or with insights into particular communities. Keep this coalition task-based, meeting only periodically, while having interested subcommittees tackle specific, achievable tasks that advance progress toward the arts learning vision. Secure resources from various partners to support this coalition. Be careful not to let one arm of the sector dominate the agenda, or the coalition could dissolve. Stay focused on the big picture—the learner—rather than on the needs of the various organizations or sectors.

Re-articulate your vision for the learner in the larger arts and learning sector. Share and examine best practices around the state and from elsewhere. Articulate and write down your shared priorities. Develop simply stated outcomes that the formal network could achieve together. Select priorities and goals in the next five years. Flesh out priorities, best practices and action steps to be taken. Begin regional discussions. Reach beyond what you know already, but prioritize and focus to make the goals achievable and measurable. Have at least one joint project, program or service to focus your state network. This allows you to get to work, moving from the realm of ideas into action. The following areas are priorities for such collaborative work.

*Resources:*

*Arts Education Partnership (Arts Education Partnership 2000)*

*For the greater good: A framework for advancing state arts education partnerships (Ellis and Dreeszen 2003)*

*Rhode Island Arts Learning Network (Rhode Island Arts Learning Network 2003)*

**Develop advocacy arm**

As Commission members and agency officials can educate but not advocate, encourage the development of

a separate advocating entity to lobby elected officials. State level leadership from the Commission can help identify gaps and opportunities in the arts and learning sector; this study is a part of that process. You can point to priorities and help people take advantage of existing tools elsewhere in the country. Arts and education advocates then need to run with that leadership and mobilize across their different “silos” to speak with a unified voice.

*Resources:*

*Consider adapting The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Art’s Alliance for Arts Education model, which serves some states well. In addition, Tennessean’s for the Arts (TFTA) could develop an education subcommittee that has a role. Consider the Delaware State Arts Council strategy of collecting names, and e-mail and contact information for designated advocates. These people across the states and legislative districts may then be quickly mobilized.*

### Map strengths across the state by school and community

While this investigation gives a broad sense of some of the priorities across the state, we found a lack of collected, disseminated information on the nuts and bolts of what’s happening in learning and the arts. The Tennessee Department of Education has an arts education database as well as invaluable informal knowledge. But schools, cultural organizations and communities would benefit from a centralized resource providing the following information:

- Data about arts educators and programs in pre K-12 schools.
- Locations of willing master teachers/teaching artists for arts integration.
- Public community-based arts classes, private lessons.
- Education programs at cultural institutions.
- Relevant higher education departments.
- Pre-professional and professional arts training and development, both not-for-profit and for-profit organizations.

With access to such a guide, parents and community members could identify new avenues for learning. Providers and supporters could rally together to address gaps. This might mean making available resources, technical assistance and mentors for communities trying to add arts specialists for the first time. Or, educational opportunities could develop out of knowledge about proximity, such as a demonstration of an arts integrated classroom.

To collect comprehensive information is a serious endeavor. Depending on who your partners are and their interests and abilities, select one or two areas to start the collection. Expand as you add appropriate partners. In addition, invite the field to share and update information in a decentralized fashion. Link to existing databases, such as your artist roster, *Who’s Dancin’ Now*, or arts specialist mentor lists. If this becomes an important direction for your field, you may find it leads to developing indicators of quality—and a focus on assessment. But, for now, people just want to know what’s happening—and not happening—where.

*Resources:*

*Who's Dancin' Now*, PBS national searchable arts education database (Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) 2001)

*NASAA Arts and Learning Resources for State Leaders* (The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies 2001)

Joint Education Reform Effort

As a result of this research, the Commission staff and their counterparts at the Tennessee Department of Education have started investigating collaborative arts and learning education reform models elsewhere in the country. Such collaboration provides the opportunity to demonstrate, not just talk about, the importance of arts-infused learning environments. In addition, with many participating schools and their communities, you can develop a larger learning community around school reform and better schools for Tennessee students.

We support this exploration. Bring in other partners, such as higher education and interested communities—including their governments, non-arts service organizations and school districts. Make this relevant to Tennessee, taking lessons learned from other states and adapting them to your state's needs. We found support for both strengthening sequential arts education and arts integration in this investigation; consider including both. While we offer specific advice in the appendix, one critical new idea arises that we mention below.

*Community component—mobilize everyday people*

Encourage participating schools/districts to develop an organized affinity group from the community. Groups should include arts, arts education and education professionals, as many arts-based education reform movements do. But, they could also represent:

- arts education opportunities outside of the school
- non-arts providers that could offer arts education opportunities, such as youth centers
- supportive parents and family members
- interested every day folks not directly connected to the school, such as businesses, young professionals and rotary clubs
- representatives from different segments of the community's populations, including young people
- teachers of post-secondary education
- local artists and people who work in the arts
- politically savvy supporters, such as elected officials or board members

Such a local group serves multiple purposes:

- Grassroots support: They should develop priorities on how to support young people and arts-based education. This resident group can lobby school boards and serve on committees that shape the school system, or even, as in the Miami-Dade County School District, field arts-education supportive candidates for



office, such as on the school board (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership 1999). For affinity group participants to be successful at this, they have to think bigger than their organizations and budgets, and support the group's priorities—whether adding a visual arts teacher or adopting a particular literacy strategy.

- Identifying and linking learning opportunities: Even as the education reform effort focuses on schools, the group can help identify and mobilize out-of-school supports. Community-based organizations participating benefit from their educational services becoming more familiar to the in-school providers, and hopefully, the families.
- Advice: The group can provide a critical friend's outside eye as the education reform progresses.

Our Tennessee investigation reminds us of the importance of arts and learning opportunities in the community and the involvement of “regular people.” At the same time, research points to the importance of a segment of politically mobilized community when it comes to sustaining strong arts education (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership 1999). Such an affinity group can help the reform effort stay focused on young people and address the challenges of soft funding and sustainability by advocating for line item and budget-integrated funding.

*Resources:*

*Fairfax County, Virginia formed a public-private partnership, the Fairfax Arts Coalition for Education (FACE), for advocacy. Its parents, teachers, students, business leaders, arts organizations and other community members help ensure the arts survive cuts during challenging times and receive support during growth. (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership 1999) p.48-49.*

## **2. Coordinate periodic regional gatherings and an annual statewide conference**

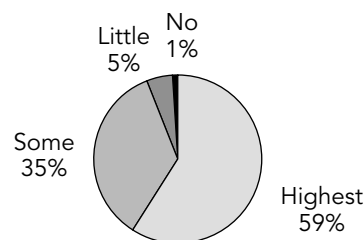
Those interviewed expressed an interest in both regional and statewide gatherings that are planned centrally. People want to learn how other schools, communities, groups, organizations and individuals are tackling common objectives. Agendas include:

- sharing promising practices, both in the state and elsewhere;
- accessing existing research; and
- learning about needs in complementary sectors, such as education (standards, current policy and its interpretation, where the arts specialists are and aren't, etc.) and not-for-profits (senior centers, community centers, youth-at-risk service providers, etc.).

Experiment with instructional design that cuts through the surface level to frank, deeper and more relevant learning experiences. Continue to refer back to the whole sector and the emerging vision of learning and the arts, so people will find commonalities across approaches. A simple place to start is asking current grantees to present their goals, approaches and what they've learned implementing the grant, both from successes and challenges. But, do not plan to limit presenters and attendees to current grantees. Rather, these gatherings are the opportunity to share practices throughout the field, while the Commission can only

fund in limited areas. Consider “piggy-backing” on existing meetings, such as the Arts Academy, meetings of school principals or the arts conference. Attendees can then optimize travel and potentially stay later to learn more about another sector. Remember, regional gatherings are easier to attend, so they can include more people. (See graph from August 31, 2004 *Interim Brief* containing questionnaire results on support for statewide arts and education conference.)

Perceived Importance of Statewide Arts & Education Conference (as specified)



### 3. Utilize communication strategies to continue discussions

To encourage people to build upon face-to-face meetings, provide a forum for continued group discussion. Computer comfortable people may opt for listserves or web-based threaded discussions. Topic-based telephone conference calls could work for others, providing the number of participants is limited. Allow people to kick-off a web topic, or chair a telephone discussion in an area of expertise.

## BOLSTER LEADERSHIP

Through your mission, statewide perspective, and leadership cultivation role in various regions and communities, you can help strengthen the capacity of the whole sector.

### *Enlist the governor*

Encourage your governor to spearhead a governor’s arts and culture affinity group that embraces the importance of arts learning. Recent actions by other governors indicate the time is ripe for a bipartisan coalition. For instance, Governor Huckabee of Arkansas, chairman of the Education Commission of the States, is spearheading “The Arts — A Lifetime Of Learning” initiative, supporting arts as part of his education reform agenda. In Rhode Island, the Governor’s Task Force on Arts Literacy is leading to a radical new approach to arts education policy and communities. State arts commissions could help mobilize a new role beyond Governor’s Arts Awards, so that these leading policymakers can voice their support of the role the arts plays in their communities and within larger issues. For instance, they can articulate why the arts should be included in the implementation of the federal education legislation, No Child Left Behind, since they are defined as a core subject. They can call for and kickoff task forces and critical gatherings that give the various agencies reasons—and a political incentive—to work together across human services, arts and education.

#### *Resources:*

*Arkansas Governor Huckabee.* (Huckabee 2004)

*Governor’s Task Force on Arts Literacy* (Governor’s Task Force on the Arts 2001)

### ***Establish arts and learning fellows***

Designate a small number of people annually from across the state as Arts and Learning Fellows. Offer these fellows a leadership development opportunity, which will help the Commission and the field, in addition to their own professional growth. Seek both state partners and higher education partners, so as to build on existing leadership development programs. To encourage collaborations among the various bureaucracies and perspectives represented in the larger arts and learning sector, select emerging leaders involved in the various parts of the sector. Arts teachers, teaching artists, arts education managers, museum educators, private teachers, professors, youth center directors, entertainment industry personnel involved in outreach—all could be represented in this group. Also, ensure fellows represent diverse perspectives that might include urban/suburban/rural; East/Middle/West; race, ethnicity, ability; fine, traditional, and popular arts; and large and small institutions as well as individuals. Our investigation suggests you should seek interdisciplinary individuals—those who “wear many hats”—as they will be natural brokers to develop bridges between the types of learning.

Fellows would meet regularly for presentations by and discussions with leaders from various, complementary external sectors, such as education, human services, folk life, humanities, health, philanthropy and the for-profit arts industry. In addition, develop a format and a “safe culture” where they can problem-solve with each other throughout the year, presenting both successes and leadership challenges in their current work for advice and feedback. This may require an outside facilitator, and might be more productive without Commission staff present. Fellows receive an honorarium.

Fellows give back by serving as an ad-hoc arts and learning advisory committee to the Commission over the years to provide continuous feedback on developing relevant grants programs and services. Fellows also agree to share (through presentations, discussions and/or articles/reports) useful points they learn with each other and the broader arts education field at least twice a year for the next two years. Ask fellows to prepare a final project connected to their work or communities that help unify the sector on behalf of the learner. Encourage them to reflect and express these ideas using the multiple modalities that the arts offer—not just written reports. You may want to reserve a little funding to help implement the top idea.

Cultivate alumnae, too, bringing them together periodically, and providing a moderated, closed list serve for on-going discussion. In a few years, look for this cadre to create new connections and better communication within arts and learning sectors.

#### ***Resources:***

*Ford Foundation (Ford Foundation 2005)*

*W.K. Kellogg Foundation (Beineke and Sublett )*

*White House (White House Fellows Program 2005)*

*Snelling Center of Government (Snelling Center of Government 2005)*

## GRANT IMPROVEMENT

Funding is still important. From the endorsement for high quality to catalyzing change with first time funding in a less-served community, the Commission's grants serve many purposes. To more strategically support a stronger learning in the arts sector, consider reorganizing your granting programs involving education.

### *Simplify*

Currently, you can find education activities not only in the various Commission arts education programs, but also embedded in other areas, such as the grants to the community program. Rather than having multiple programs and forms, have one major Arts and Learning category. For applicants engaged in many aspects of education, this simplifies the work of applying to different programs. Saving time is saving money.

### *Realign to learning and the arts areas*

In the application, have grantees select which one or more types of arts education opportunities they are proposing to strengthen:

#### Education: Skill Development

- Sequential arts education
- Arts integration
- Professional development

#### Learning to Strengthen Communities and Understanding

- Arts exposure and introduction
- Social services and the arts
- Learning in cultural contexts

*Please simplify application and grant report/evaluation process. Educators have such a heavy workload in public schools.*

EAST TENNESSEE EDUCATOR

### *Articulate learning goals*

Ask, "Who is the target learner?" and "What will people learn as a result of this work?" Then, over time, help people develop ways of measuring to what extent they achieved that learning goal. Ask how this support fits within the larger sector.

### *Help grantees with limited capacity compete*

Separate the review for larger and smaller learning in the arts grants. For large grants, have deadlines once a year with panel review, though twice a year (supported by the savings from consolidating grant categories) would be ideal.

For small grants, require less paperwork. This could be an expansion of the popular Student Ticket Subsidy format, or as simple as artist grants. Like a fast response grant, offer multiple deadlines in a year with staff/commission review and fast turnaround. Allow fiscal agents for groups of individuals, linkages to for-

profit organizations and accept applications from non-arts entities, as many small communities do not have a 501-c-3 cultural institution. This also facilitates partnerships within the community and develops leadership in the arts from emerging coalitions, individual teachers, and others. To promote new applicants and grantees, but still use the first come, first serve of applicants that meet a certain standard, open a *New Applicant* “window of time” two weeks before the general deadline for those who have not received a grant in the last five years from the Commission. Publicize it heavily.

### ***After piloting new practices, wrap into overall Arts and Learning grant***

At times, the Commission may want to promote certain promising practices that are not widespread in the state. Rather than creating a new grant program for every good idea, work with one larger general Arts and Learning category. Pilot the new practices separately for a defined period of time. Over this time, create forums for the pilot sites to share what they learn with the field. Then, encourage the pilot sites to seek funding in the larger Arts and Learning category, if that is appropriate. This way, new ideas are supported, but the laundry list of grant programs—and the staff resources associated with it—remains manageable.

### ***Improve services to less familiar applicants***

- **PROVIDE LOCAL AND REGIONAL TECHNOLOGICAL APPLICATION ASSISTANCE WHEN YOU MOVE TO E-GRANTS.** E-grants will help save staff time, which could then be used to increase services in the field—an excellent simplification. However, it could increase the barriers to those less familiar with or with less access to computers. Your granting program that makes computers available helps, but only when people take advantage of it. “Know-how” and comfort level need to be addressed. Contract with partners for simple local/regional assistance so that unfamiliar applicants have a place to go or someone to call who is not a Commission staff member. Also, during a long transition to e-grants, provide a paper/snail mail option. Offer incentives for using the technology.

*Getting the word out and helping schools and small organizations master the grant-writing and application process would be an improvement to the program in that it would allow more groups, teachers, etc. to take advantage of opportunities.*

MIDDLE TENNESSEE  
ARTS ADMINISTRATOR

- **BE PROACTIVE AS WELL AS REACTIVE WITH STAFF SUPPORT.** Many current grantees value the personal attention from Commission staff, which helps them apply successfully. However, less frequent grantees or those never receiving grants call for improved assistance addressing barriers to successful applications. And, there are not enough staff members to provide personal attention to all the people and organizations eligible to apply. A couple of suggestions:

**PERSONAL VISITS TO SELECTED NEW COMMUNITIES.** Identify communities that have not received learning grant funds in the last five years. Divide them by region. Select a small random sample from each region to visit personally and meet with representatives from school districts, higher

education, community, government, newspaper, human service personnel, and even faith-based organizations. In those discussions, do a few things.

1. Learn about the schools and the community—what’s happening now in arts and learning? What could happen?
2. Educate them on the Commission’s services and grant programs.
3. Enlist their help to get the word out to their localities about Commission services and grant opportunities. Encourage some to jointly support or host the following.
4. Follow up with grant writing workshops for beginners, which could be contracted out to external providers. Share information on other granting opportunities in addition to those offered by the Commission. Publicize in the newspapers.

KEEP TRACK OF HOW MANY COMMUNITIES SERVED, AND TO WHAT EXTENT. Measure success not just in new successful applicants, but also by how many new constituents participate in and learn from your services (conferences, information, etc.).

- INCREASE ACCOUNTABILITY OF AND POSSIBILITIES FOR PARTNERS WHO ACT AS GATEKEEPERS OR RE-GRANTERS. Develop clear, measurable expectations around local and regional partnerships that include access provisions. Expand your list of potential regional partners to include those that focus on outreach and agree to meet or exceed the partnership criteria. Reward successful partners with increased responsibility and contractual opportunities; encourage them to present to the field on their strategies. Create a climate of continuous improvement. Ask, “How can we reach rarely or never served Tennesseans?” As you develop state level collaborations with non-arts partners, help them broker similar regional and local level relationships.

### ***Encourage further collaboration across Commission staff***

Within existing Tennessee Arts Commission programs and services, education crosses staff lines. Staff already collaborates, as they did on this investigation and in their roles as program directors. However, more can be done to tap the expertise across the Commission staff for education-oriented support. Create regular opportunities for collaboration on *learning and the arts* programs and services among Arts Education, Folk, Access and Community programs, as well as others. Folk and Access can help with inclusion efforts in communication with related sectors and in the development or selection of non-arts partners, committees, fellows and presenters.



ASSOCIATION FOR VISUAL ARTISTS—CHATTANOOGA

# Needs and Priorities

The previous recommendations flow from the following trends collected during this investigation. Overall, we find these needs prevailed as the top priorities:

- **INFORMATION EXCHANGE:** Improve the systems of communication among those involved in arts and learning.
- **ADVOCACY:** Strengthen advocacy for learning in and through the arts.
- **BROADER SECTOR DEFINITION:** Broaden the definition and practice of arts education.
- **ACCESS:** Increase the number of people involved in arts learning, reducing societal barriers.

With attention to these areas, the Commission can further enhance its role as catalyst for the arts and learning opportunities. Look for more people involved in arts education, and greater attention in the press and public. These are key ingredients to building increased resources for arts education, to lead to stronger educational opportunities in learning in the arts throughout Tennessee.

## 1. IMPROVE WAYS OF EXCHANGING INFORMATION

The field requests you improve the nature, means and frequency of interchange both within the arts and learning sector and with other related sectors. When we do not know about opportunities offered by others, we cannot make them available to our students. Sharing information also strengthens the network that supports arts learning.

## Communication

A broad array of communication-related needs and suggestions arose from both the questionnaire and textual analysis.<sup>1</sup>

- **IMPROVEMENT OF COMMISSION COMMUNICATION:** Broader, more proactive dissemination of information about grants and services is needed. Work with non-arts partners to get the word out. While current, frequent grantees feel well-served and in touch, there is a large part of the state that does not. Of particular concern are rural schools and communities, West Tennessee, arts specialists and small organizations; other geographic areas and groups may also be included.<sup>2</sup> As a service organization, don't wait for them to come to you. Work with partners in the state and across the field in arts and other sectors to communicate with them *in their language*. Use a business mindset: learn about the broader consumers and sell the services. Be wary of what former National Endowment for the Arts Chairman and Tennessean Bill Ivey calls the "defensive, conservative business practices" (Ivey 2005). Rather than have the sense that the grant dollars are limited and should be protected, think about the services and leadership the Commission provides as being unlimited. You need the larger base to improve your services to more residents and to cultivate an advocacy network.
- **LOCAL ARTS NEWS COVERAGE:** Network with and coordinate local journalists to both get the word out from the Commission (best practices, grantees, opportunities) and get the word in (local successes, changing communities, showcasing student achievements in and through the arts).
- **WEB AND PRINT:** Technology works for computer-savvy people, like staff at most Tennessee arts organizations. Print works for many folks less comfortable, proficient or with less access to the computer. The Commission's information must be available in multiple formats and be marketed through individuals, and arts and non-arts organizations across the state. Centralize information on resources, such as arts and learning advocacy tools, funding from other sectors and promising practices. Create searchable ways to connect with other Tennesseans involved in learning and the arts. Reflecting input from the field, explore making information on your Web site easier to find.

*Please, let the community know you exist! Please reach out especially to our middle schools; we need your help to continue to let our children experience art as something more...*

MIDDLE TENNESSEE,  
MOM OF BAND STUDENT

## Coordinate Related Sectors

Many people participating in our investigation want better systems to communicate between arts and

<sup>1</sup> On the questionnaire, "Communication" is defined as "Getting the word out to the public, clarity, promoting successful grants in the field." Here, it had the top ranking mean of 2.26, with respondents asked to rank from 1 as their top priority through 5. (n=142). Communication related codes totaled 115 in the textual analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Communities of color that speak English as a second language, or have various disabilities may also be less served. Investigate further the needs of these and other communities.



education institutions<sup>3</sup> and related organizations.

- Arts educators are often left out when they could be central to larger arts and learning collaborations.
- Participating district arts and curricula coordinators could be better utilized to bridge school and community arts learning opportunities.
- Arts organizations have increasing difficulty sharing information about their services with teachers and school leaders.
- Teachers and arts organizations would like to collaborate within the social service sectors, but need to know whom to call.
- Humanities groups, parks and recreation, and libraries offer opportunities to learn in or through the arts, which are not well known by other sectors.

When we do not know about opportunities offered by others, we cannot make them available to our students. The young person needs to be able to flow between her artistic life at home, into school arts classes, to community arts experiences and study (Ellis 2001). Planning, communication and coordination can help her flow seamlessly. In addition, we need to be reminded how many ‘clubs’ we belong to—and that each person can help create a stronger linkage. One person could be a parent, board member, student, artist and teacher, all in one. To the extent information is shared among those groups, they can better plan to work together.

## 2. ADVOCACY

The arts and learning sector may contribute to the pressing call for advocacy around arts and education. A top priority, we found specific areas of focus are:

- **SEQUENTIAL K-12 ARTS EDUCATION:** In all disciplines (visual arts, theatre, dance), make use of existing supportive policies (graduation arts credit, arts included in No Child Left Behind core subjects), and explore options to figure out what do about certification in the highly qualified teacher framework.<sup>4</sup>
- **PROMOTING ARTS INTEGRATION:** Learning through the arts is seen as an important strategy for school and community.<sup>5</sup>

The Tennessee Department of Education takes the lead in state service support for schools and educators. Collaboratively, the Commission and the Department of Education could ensure the state of arts education is known and shared, to better enable the larger community to mobilize to address any gaps. With the gaps better identified, the larger community can advocate strategically. The Commission’s role, according to our investigation, is to assist the field.

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<sup>3</sup> “Links to other sectors/funding” rated fourth out of seven services on the questionnaire and fared prominently in the textual analysis.

<sup>4</sup> “Sequential arts education” appears with 61 code frequencies.

<sup>5</sup> “Promoting arts integration” has 76 code frequencies.

The field would particularly like help with the following areas:

- Reach state legislators and local governmental officials.
- Better connect state and local level advocacy efforts.
- Promote showcasing of student work as a powerful advocacy tool in the arts.
- Educate other state agencies about the role of the arts in their work.
- Educate the field on how to improve their advocacy efforts.
- Promote the value of arts in a civil society for a larger public than the elite.
- Take advantage of existing national structures and tools.
- Take care to ensure advocacy actions are legal.

### 3. BROADEN THE SECTOR

From different perspectives, we heard a need to expand the definition of arts education to incorporate the arts learning concept. A “bigger tent” needs to be raised. With an expanded constituency comes increased political clout to bring about change. To include those communities and people who might be served by learning and the arts, but not traditional arts education brings us closer to achieving the “access” part of the Commission’s mission.

#### *Honor a broader cultural life*

A dominant theme recurred throughout the questionnaire comments, note cards, interviews and site visits: Tennessee has a rich, unique and varied cultural life, as illuminated by your recent *A History of Tennessee Arts: Creating Traditions, Expanding Horizons* (Van West and Binnicker 2004). All who participate in each of these art forms—the blues, the blacksmithy, the fiction, the film—have learned what they do: some through formalized schooling and years of practice; others through self-driven exploration and experimentation; and still others from long held family traditions passed down. The learning and the arts sector needs to benefit from this breadth. In our research, Tennesseans stressed the importance of honoring a broader cultural life.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, people recommended putting arts learning in a community context. The inclusion of family and people not connected to schools helps complete an artificially separated community. Values about arts are not developed in a vacuum and not just developed at school.

### 4. ACCESS

Many groups of Tennesseans encounter barriers to arts education. Some school districts squeezed by skyrocketing special education and health care costs don’t know how to support the arts. We heard of a

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<sup>6</sup> The “Honor a broader cultural life” category had the most frequent code frequency (133) in our textual analysis. See What We Did in Appendix for coding and categorization methodology.

generation of guiding adults—teachers, parents, role models—who had no sequential arts education or exposure to cultural institutions themselves. Rural teachers spoke of how the packed school day does not leave time for a four hour round trip to the closest performing center.

The top access concerns from the investigation include:

- **ENGAGEMENT OF BROADER PUBLIC:** Find ways to bring the fine arts into general public life and emphasize the value of these arts to “everyday” for everyday folks and new ears.<sup>7</sup>
- **CLASS:** Wealthy have access, poorer do not; narrow funding streams; inequalities in the system.<sup>8</sup>
- **PLACE-BASED ACCESS:** Help alleviate transportation hurdles; build satellite campuses and offerings; avoid a location bias in education grant criteria toward large urban cultural institutions; don’t penalize non-arts applicants as they may be the only community site; and facilitate touring.

Additional access challenges include:

- addressing program wait lists, where demand outstrips available slots;
- reaching students who are home-schooled or live in “first ring” suburbs;
- inclusion of seniors and people with disabilities; and
- working around issues of race, heritage, ethnicity and language.

Some suggestions from the field to address access include: per capita funding approaches, an arts education advisory group including underrepresented populations, reoriented funding priorities and advocacy and communication.

Access is a complex issue. We heard in our discussions that the Commission should involve more people so they will value the arts, thereby strengthening the whole sector. And, people in rural communities, people of color and members of the general public encouraged the Commission to broaden the definition of arts and education, to help create interest in more populations. However, there seem to be gaps between intention of greater involvement and inclusion of people left out.

In addition, with small organizations stretched to the limit, grantees do not necessarily want to give up something to make room for others. On the questionnaire (many respondents have been grantees), access was defined as “increase the number of grantees, even if grant awards are smaller”. As a result, access ranked at the bottom of priorities.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, people spoke generously during the vision work, but more candidly at other times, mentioning turf issues that can make partnerships uneven and reaching out difficult.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> “Engage broader public” category code frequency = 90. Most frequent code mentioned by arts organizations.

<sup>8</sup> “Financial” category code frequency = 68. Most frequent code mentioned by educators.

<sup>9</sup> Access ranked a mean average of 3.58. There were five categories to be ranked in total. See Appendix.

<sup>10</sup> Code “Acknowledge turf challenges” appears 27 times in textual analysis.

## 5. HELP THE FIELD HELP ITSELF

### Research

Two very different uses for research-based knowledge arose in this investigation.

- **TO IMPROVE THE WORK.** Numerous educators, arts specialists, arts education managers and groups of teaching artists are already taking a systematic approach to improving their work in arts and education.<sup>11</sup> Learning from weaknesses as well as strengths helps build a stronger field. Others asked for help in using documentation and research in their work.
- **AS AN ADVOCACY TOOL.** Sharing academic, national and local results documenting arts can help the field “make the case.”<sup>12</sup> Some in the field asked for help utilizing existing research. Others saw a role for better documentation of good practice within the state.

Keep in mind the difference between using documentation for a learning tool and for PR. Both are useful. But, be clear they are not the same.

### Develop Capacity

The education field has long engaged in professional development. When it works well, teachers have the opportunity to learn, grow and improve their practice. This investigation indicates that a larger concept of professional development is needed for Tennesseans. People involved in arts learning would benefit from a larger learning community—both professionals and amateurs (parents, residents, volunteers, people from other professions). When we broke down the textual data into different roles, we heard the need for nurturing and community—just around different skills.

- **DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROFESSIONALS.** Nurture the “artists within” education, arts education and arts-in-education professionals. Show and do as well as talk. Other skill sets include:
  - Arts educators: teaching standards; developing curriculum; connecting artists; development of curricula with each other and leading arts education professors; and connect with artists who have complementary skills.
  - Arts organizations: applying standards; developing teaching artists; and connecting with education administrators.

*...as we move to strengthen arts education within the schools and classrooms, I'm hoping the TAC will provide equal emphasis to professional community arts educators and community arts education settings, especially to ensure that standards are being met.*

WEST TENNESSEE  
ARTS ADMINISTRATOR

<sup>11</sup> “Research to improve work in the field” tallies at 51 code frequencies.

<sup>12</sup> “Research as advocacy tool” becomes 38 code frequencies if code for research dissemination (26) is included.

- **DEVELOPMENT OF LAYPERSON ARTISTS AND ADVOCATES.** The parents, board members and interested community members that we investigated want to improve their ability to publicly persuade people of the importance of arts education; talk to legislators; connect to and cite research; and make presentations to local policymakers, such as school board members.

## 6. DON'T FORGET ABOUT FUNDING

While current grantees were happy to participate in this work of envisioning a stronger arts education system, some were wary of changes to the current Commission services as they know it. One 'happy grantee' voice appearing from this research complimented the Tennessee Arts Commission on its personal involvement and helpfulness, and warned it not to make too many changes. From this, we deduce that reorienting the grant program should be done with sensitivity and in collaboration with both your current constituents and those who would like to participate more fully with the Commission.

People asked us to share that the existing funding received from the Commission helps leverage other dollars from both local and national sources. The imprimatur of the Commission's panel review process particularly helps some strong cultural organizations.

A few funding priorities arose in the course of this investigation:

### *Grow a bigger pot*

Through better documentation of what's working in the state; more evaluation of the Commission's interventions; and a focus on development of leaders, the statewide advocacy network may be able to better support the case for government's role in arts and learning through a state arts commission.

### *Broker Other Resources*

While the Commission's budget funding is a helpful, powerful engine for the not-for-profit cultural sector, some of the work you help catalyze has the potential to tap other, larger sources of funding. In addition, communities that do not receive grants from the Commission may yet support important learning and arts opportunities through different resources. At the state level, link to complementary sectors and engage in professional development at the national level to learn about potential funding streams in non-arts agencies.<sup>13</sup> Hold resource fairs, publish information, and provide or link people to technical assistance in partnership with the other sectors to help artistic learning opportunities embed within other social programs.

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<sup>13</sup> Through the Arts Education Partnership and other entities.





# How to Use This Study

As the Tennessee Arts Commission plans to strengthen its work in arts education, use this investigation as a starting place for continued dialogue with state policymakers, partners, and the field. You'll find new ways of approaching the sector, and various needs and solutions, depending on which portion of the field is your focus. Pick and choose from the suggestions, based on your capacity and resources. This is not an all or nothing list; moreover, since the field is ever changing in reaction to politics, demographics and societal challenges, develop systems for continuing to reach out to engage the experience and perspectives of the residents of Tennessee. Finally, seek to expand your quest to learn what is important and what is needed by working with new state partners, such as Health and Human Services and Humanities personnel. This study is bound in part by whom and what the Commission and its local arts partners already know: Continue to probe beyond current grantees to reach ever further into the general public. Bit by bit, by doing so, you may grow a much larger constituency that articulates its relationship to learning and the arts.







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## METHODS: WHAT WE DID

Approach: Multiple methods of collecting and analyzing information = triangulation

We strove to collect perspectives from a range of Tennesseans involved in the work of arts learning in a variety of ways: Some were direct, as in interviews, focus groups or questionnaires; others were indirect, as we observed sites, institutes and interactions. Across those qualitative and quantitative responses, we culled the most prevalent themes to share with you. Communities involved through interviews or visits: Bartlett, Chattanooga, Clarksville, Erin, Gallatin, Jackson, Johnson City, Knoxville, Madison, Martin, Memphis, Nashville, Oak Ridge, South Dickson, statewide perspective, and Woodbury.

### *Research Methods*

Method	Collected	Purpose
Questionnaire	May 2004	On-line and Mailed Survey: (Commission lists) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find out opinions about current programs and services from people already involved with the Commission (we received 152 completed questionnaires)</li> </ul>
Site Visits and Tours of Communities	May 2004 June 2004 Sept. 2004	Observation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communities and their relationship to the arts</li> <li>Examples of arts and education practices, as determined by the Commission and its partners</li> <li>Teachers where they work or meet (both arts specialists and other teachers)</li> <li>Stratified by region: East, Middle, and West</li> </ul>
Focus Groups/ Discussions	May 2004 June 2004 Sept. 2004	Discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interaction among interested members of the field</li> <li>Hear from targeted perspectives including: educators, teaching artists, arts and culture organizations, education administrators</li> <li>Develop a larger problem-solving body</li> </ul>
Public Forums		Discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interaction with communities</li> <li>Hear from public as well as interested stakeholders, including local officials, board members, et al.</li> <li>Develop a larger problem-solving body</li> </ul>
Interviews	May through Sept. 2004	15 telephone interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-depth collection of advice and perspectives from a targeted sample of various leaders in the field</li> </ul> Stratified by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Region: East, Middle, and West</li> <li>Perspective: arts educators, education administrators, teaching artists, arts administrators, parents, community-based educators and others</li> <li>Demographics: urban, suburban, rural and various races/ethnicities</li> </ul>

## Analytical Process

Quantifying the close-ended questionnaire responses and using descriptive statistics via Microsoft Excel 2003 provided us with averages, such as the mean, mode, and median.<sup>14</sup> We examined all responses in general and priority responses by region. Open-ended responses were included in the qualitative data analysis process broken down by role.

A set of rigorous coding procedures guided the analysis of textual data (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Transcripts, notes and participant note cards from site visits, interviews, focus groups, public forums, as well as researcher observations and selected researcher field notes and reflections were open coded both by hand and using HyperResearch 2.6 software. In this case, the data were entered in separate cases within the study by role: Educator, Arts Organization, Artist, General, Researcher and Commission staff. We broke ideas that answer the research question into small discrete incidents in the text, and we named and tallied each idea—or code—for frequency of occurrence in the data. In this study, 548 total codes separated the data into 2,457 code instances, not including researcher reflections. When appropriate, ideas received compound names to tally related areas, such as Access or Communication, which were broken up over various categories. The codes were categorized using theory into similar groupings, creating 112 categories. Using axial coding on the 20 most frequent categories, we examined relationships between categories and subcategories to develop main categories from these data, which are used in part to organize our findings.

In addition, the multiple perspectives of the research team and the Commission staff informed the analysis. Important themes and possibilities for the data were illuminated through researcher reflective notes, summary reflections after visits, telephone discussions following visits, car discussions following visits and post-data collection analysis discussions in person and by telephone. Questionnaire results incorporated with textual and observation analysis formed the final results of the study.

The following tables are excerpted from the *Interim Brief* to the Tennessee Arts Commission summarizing the initial questionnaire results.

Ranking	Category	Definition	Mean
1	Communication	Getting the word out to the public, clarity, promoting successful grants in the field.	2.26
2	Criteria	Eligibility, how projects are judged.	2.76
3	Assistance	Guidance on grant writing.	3.00
4	Administration	Guidelines, deadlines, application process.	3.22
5	Access	Increase the number of grantees, even if grant awards are smaller.	3.58

<sup>14</sup> The questionnaire sample was not randomly selected but was instead 'who responded' questionnaire from the Commission's e-mail and education lists as well as public members who encountered it on the web- as a reader's response survey might. The sample can be assumed to be more arts-interested and friendly than the general public and consist of people more familiar with the Commission's programs. Statistics and interpretations should be used with caution.

Ranking	Area	Definition	Mean
1	Advocacy	Help the public see the importance of arts and education.	2.45
2	Organizational Development	Help on strengthening organizations and programs.	3.18
3	Networking	Bringing the arts education community together.	3.44
4	Link to Other Sectors/Funding	Connect to non-arts opportunities.	3.94
5	Policy	Help improve laws and policy structures.	4.63
6	Leadership	Help identify leaders in arts education.	4.65
7	Evaluation	Advice/tools to help with evaluation.	4.77

## SENSITIVITY TO SPECIFIC VOICES

If we separate the investigation results by perspective, a few different priorities also emerge:

### Themes by Role

Artists:

- **NURTURE ARTIST**—Enable us to continue to create, even in our education role. Don't let the artistic part of our work get lost.
- **ADAPT FOR EDUCATORS**—Support educators and their challenges. Federal mandates narrow their time; standards need to be assimilated; and arts education needs to be supported in the schools.
- **RESEARCH**—Document and disseminate, or good work will be lost to the archives and the greater public.

Educators:

- **ACCESS**—Tackle the challenges of “haves and have not’s” in public school arts education, especially financial and geographic disparities. Include the general public to a greater extent.
- **ADVOCACY**—Support arts education in public schools.
- **RESPECT**—Move arts specialists in schools to the center of discussions about arts education.

Arts Organizations:

- **ACCESS**—Expand opportunities to include more of the general public in arts education; combat disparities and inequities.
- **MOBILIZE**—Help us find new ways to work together “across silos” to build a stronger system and learn from each other.
- **ADVOCACY**—Promote arts education, the involvement of regular people in the arts and arts integration.

*I think the most important thing that TAC can do is to promote communication among arts educators. Many of us do our work in relative isolation and we need the support of others.*

EAST TENNESSEE EDUCATOR

Everybody Else (board members, parents, humanities workers, people with multiple roles, human services sectors):

- **ADVOCACY**—Catalyze more effective advocacy with legislators and through the media to market arts education to regular folks.
- **INCLUSION**—Broaden the definition of the arts, and connect to folk and local heritage; combat disparities and inequities.
- **ARTS INTEGRATION**—Promote learning through the arts.
- **COMMUNITY**—Better connect in and out of school learning opportunities.

### *Themes by Region*

Along the way on the site visits and through the interviews, we noticed some regional differences in priorities.

West:

- **INCLUSION**—Find new ways to include this region in the resources and services offered by the Commission. Within communities connect to their specific heritage and strengths.
- **ISOLATION**—Encourage communities to network within and across the region to strengthen arts and learning opportunities. Rural areas feel particularly isolated.
- **LEADERSHIP**—Cultivate emerging leaders to take a greater role in mobilizing the region's potential.

Middle:

- **CROSS-SECTOR**—Help connect the cultural communities with the human service and social sectors, in addition to the education sector.
- **REGION**—Seek ways to help strong existing arts learning resources outside the schools become relevant to the larger region and state.
- **NETWORKS**—Help individuals and groups working on similar problems and opportunities, and with specific national models find each other and share practices.

East:

- **ADVOCACY**—Help residents become more effective advocates.
- **REGION**—Encourage communities to find ways to work across slightly larger regions to meet demand, mobilize interested advocates and avoid duplication of services.
- **LEADERSHIP**—Cultivate emerging leaders to take a greater role in mobilizing the region's potential.

## EDUCATION REFORM EFFORT— FURTHER ADVICE

As you consider collaborating on a joint education reform effort, here are a few pieces of advice to consider.

## Young people first

Ensure that you keep what's good for young people and their whole education at the forefront. The arts methodologies may be the approach, but honor the fact that a range of subject mastery will be critical to young person's later success. Find ways to include young people in the implementation and decision-making. For instance, they may serve as tour guides, presenting their work to policymakers, as mentors, and committee members.

*How about beginning arts education ridiculously early like nine months before the birth of the mother?*

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

## Whole school

Rather than gathering a handful of interested classrooms, seek to engage whole schools, or even feeder sequences of elementary-middle-secondary schools and their corresponding districts. Funding decisions may more often be made at the district level, where you may also find district coordinators who are willing partners. Also, this allows you to capitalize upon arts specialists teaching in more than one school.

Work with a diverse selection of interested whole schools. When approaching professional development, include not only the teachers, but also education administrators, aides, staff, support workers, and affiliated parental, student and volunteer groups in professional development opportunities. Encourage non-professionals to attend professional development to spread the value, knowledge and interest into the community. To the extent whole education communities participate in this reform effort, you can develop a culture and clarity of purpose permeating the school environment.

## Learning community

Combat isolation, encourage change and tackle many of the needs addressed in this report by cultivating a support network among participating communities. Empower teacher leaders, including arts specialists. Explore ways to develop new solutions adapting to current educational challenges. Our investigation highlighted the pressures of lack of time during the school day, in part to meet the testing requirements of No Child Left Behind.

Professional development should not be a one shot deal or a top down approach, but organic to an ongoing, growing learning community. Participants need opportunities to learn, apply, ask questions, adapt and try again, so that they may find the solutions that work while drawing strength from each other. Explore ways to provide more planning and collaboration time for arts specialists so they can be central to the education reform process. Build in time for reflection and celebration of successes, both individually and as a community.

Early on, expand the learning community to interested schools, teachers, districts, cultural partners who may not have the financial support from your education reform effort, but have the interest. Even if they have to pay their own way, the interested broader involvement will help broaden the effect of this work

beyond the limits of your funding.

### ***Teacher driven***

Encourage teacher leadership and educator-conceived solutions. Have connecting principles that connects the effort, but allow for local flexibility to make things work. Through the learning community, enable teachers to share their wisdom and challenges and articulate their own needs for professional development. Encourage people from within to take the lead on professional development—bring people from outside in response to what people say they need. Help connect educators in and out of schools, such as generalist educators, arts specialists, community music school teachers, teaching artists, and museum educators.

### ***Coordination***

Ensure centralized coordination of the effort, so that educators and their partners have a place to go with questions. This coordination helps ensure that the collaboration stays on track; can help troubleshoot challenges; and provides central information and support as local entities mobilize political support.

### ***Pilot and learn***

Determine to what extent this will be an education reform effort that works with challenged school systems rather than already strong ones. Start small with schools/ districts that represent the core of your target population (whether it is rural, large urban, failing state assessments, lacking enough arts specialists, high dropout rate, etc.). But, select the first participants by determining the highest level of interest from this population. Interest can look like many things:

- key people ready and willing to do the footwork in the school and district to help make this happen
- institutions willing to commit time, staff, space to experiment
- schools ready to connect to existing networks in the community
- key support from principals, district staff, and superintendent that can provide room and time to develop this approach
- experienced individuals who have been involved in arts-based education reform elsewhere
- existing arts specialists and teacher leaders who are ready to step into leadership roles in this reform
- philanthropic partners interested in serving the particular community or demographic

If you select partners that are the most interested and willing—primed for this opportunity—you stand the best chance of success. Moreover, this first group can create a buzz, as happened in Community School District #25 in Queens in New York (President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership 1999). They began with the first third of schools in the district—the ones most interested, then expanded to the second third. By the time they turned their attention to the last third, the success and buzz from the existing work had created a huge demand. This approach ended up influencing the wider approach adopted for all of New York City and its boroughs.

## ***Articulate goals and evaluate***

Be clear and focused. Based on this investigation, the field is interested in both stronger arts education and arts integration. If your reform effort includes both, pick just a few areas to evaluate in depth and over time. Given the high level of accountability required by No Child Left Behind, a research-based component will be critical to continued support from the public and potential funders. Look for areas to change by examining existing education reform—some of which will be standards-based, some of which will not. For instance, school culture, school environment, love of learning, and integral schools all have complementary but different sorts of measures than reading comprehension. Pull upon the arts standards for sequential arts education components, asking how are the students improving in the arts themselves? Learn from your evaluation of the pilot phase—build in the ability and time to refine and make changes rather than expect to be successful in the first year.

## ***Long-term funding***

Bring partners on early who can help raise the capital necessary for a long-term commitment to full reform. Change in school culture and practice takes time: consider planning ahead five to seven years for consistency. Pursue a thoroughly evaluated and well-documented pilot initiative to help build interest and support in a full program. It is better to start small and be successful. Seek philanthropic partners both at the state and national levels. Target the U.S. Department of Education and federal grant opportunities; work with legislators to generate support. Grow success; if you start with the elementary level, students and their families can drive the reform as they move into the middle school.

# NETWORK TOPICS AND SERVICES — FURTHER ADVICE

## ***Resource fair***

As a state leader involved with other sectors, identify and spread the word about grant programs in other sectors that could be used for learning and arts opportunities. Invite philanthropists, businesses and non-arts representatives to give out information. Have a “broker” area for connecting business employee volunteers with teachers and not-for-profits with specific needs.

Work with state partners and spread the word about services that originate outside the cultural not-for-profit realm. For instance, training in organizational management, United Way, leadership development series, advocacy, and evaluation may be available from a range of providers, higher education institutions, and service organizations not currently serving the arts and learning communities.

## ***Possible Network Topics***

Throughout the field, we heard reasons why stronger networks are important, and possible topics around which networks could be built. Prevalent advice is summarized below:

- Bring together whole communities to develop unified approaches cross sector.



- Combat isolation, particularly of arts specialists and other teachers, teaching artists.
- Link people from different institutions/organization working on similar problems.
- Link people collaborating with similar national partners, such as the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center or Wolf Trap.
- Form educator networks.
- Encourage learning across boundaries (arts disciplines, for example).

## ADVICE ON CONTINUED DATA COLLECTION

Depending on which recommendations you choose as short-term priorities, select measures linked to the appropriate areas. A few suggestions:

Using questions from 2004 Arts Education Needs Assessment Questionnaire, continue to ask about grant education effect #7 and service priority #8. Depending on new programs, add new questions relevant to programs and services. Use the open ended question, much like #10 for general guidance and clarification—it is much like your current online comment field.

To better determine how your services and programs are involving new constituents, you may want to work with partners to collect lists of people involved in other sectors. Perhaps every 6 months, or as staff resources permit, select a small random sample from those lists to contact. You could contact an arts specialist list, then a community youth group list; an elementary teacher list, then a senior center list; and so on. If by paper, make it very simple, with the option of filling in by website or snail mail. To increase response rates, follow up no responses by telephone. Work with a local higher education partner to tally the responses and perform basic statistical analyses.

Find if they have heard of the Commission and are aware of its programs. Find out to what extent they think various types of learning in and through the arts is important. If they have interacted with your programs and services, ask questions #7 and #8. Either way, invite suggestions for improvement.

The following are other measures to consider for evaluation of success of new programs and services:

### Networks:

- Location, growth and accomplishments to support the learning and arts sector.
- How Commission helps them start, grow and move through critical moments.

Collect data during gatherings, from grant materials (when supporting applicant networks), and by observation upon visiting.

### Leaders:

- What they do as a result of the fellowship.

- Inter-sector connections made through fellowship.

Collect through the reporting of the Arts and Learning Fellows.

Sectors:

- State and national grants from other sectors supporting arts learning activities in Tennessee: Do the resources increase after a few years of promotion of inter-sector collaboration?
- Extent to which other sectors involve arts personnel from the Commission and the field in planning and advisory capacities.

Collect from self-reporting form online and at gatherings; from state partners; and through surveys sent to grantees. Compile once per fiscal year.

Grants:

- Diversification of the learning and arts sector—breadth of support.
- Level of quality and depth of the learning goals articulated by applicant pool.
- Number of new grantees (in the last five years)—is it increasing?

Collect from grant application questions, database, review panels.

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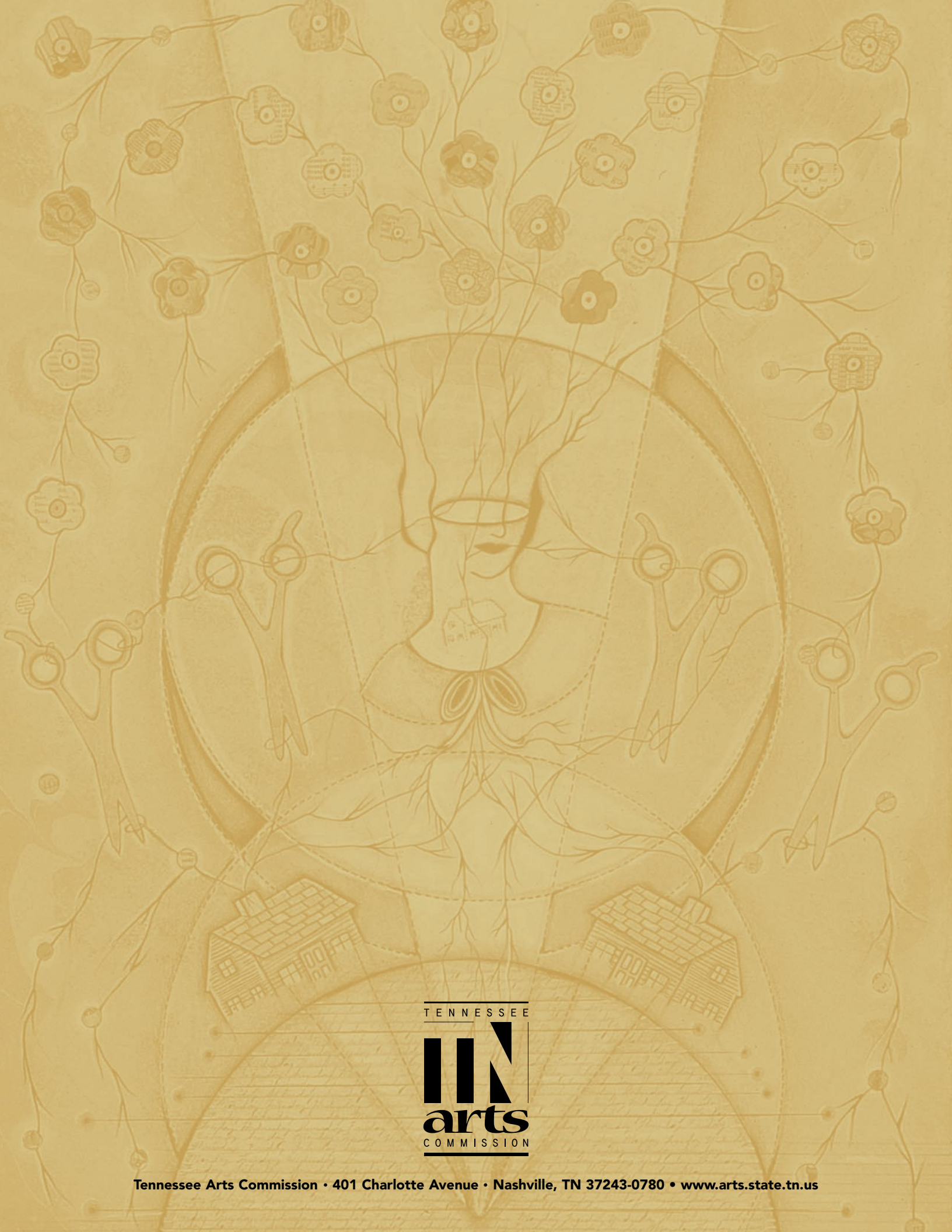
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T E N N E S S E E

