

# Arts Education Advocacy Kit

The best way to build support for any school district arts education program is to develop a strong, well-rounded program with administrative and community involvement all along the way. Such an effort takes a significant amount of time. However, with a coordinated effort making reasoned arguments and clarifying misinformation, any obstacle can be overcome.



## How to affect change

- 1. Analyze the Situation**
- 2. Organize for Action**
- 3. Recruit Help**
- 4. Implement your Program**
- 5. Continue the Support**

# 1. Analyze the Situation

**Gather or contact a small group** (5-7) of key stake holders to review the issue. This group might serve as the steering committee. If this is a district-wide issue, a representative from each school in the district may be necessary.

**Clarify and define the issue.** Get the facts straight. Don't act on unfounded rumors. If the issue involves the school or district budget, make sure you understand the budget process.

Determine who has the power to enact the change you wish to occur and therefore to whom you will take your message

- Parents
- School Board
- Superintendent
- State School Board
- Local Businesses



Identify potential allies to support your case

- Educators
- Arts educators
- Parents
- Artists
- Retired art teachers
- Private art teachers
- Arts-related businesses
- Higher education representatives
- Print and broadcast media
- Local school board members



- Students
- Arts organizations
- School administrators
- Community groups
- Business and religious leaders

## 2. Organize for Action

- **Assess the strengths** of the group that you have assembled. Use the enclosed *Volunteer Information Form*



- **Select a coordinator** to lead the effort
- **Develop a case** from several different points of view focusing on the ones that will convince your specific targets
- **Gather support materials**
- **Create a Fact Sheet** that addresses your specific issue and contains general arts education advocacy information
- **Decide on a campaign sound bite or slogan** for a unified message
- *Include the change you want to enact and a brief reason why*
- **Be aware** of any opposing efforts such as other school programs vying for funds or other groups who believe that the arts are a “frill”. Be prepared to counter their arguments. However, argue only for the arts, not against other subjects. Strive for a well-rounded and balanced curriculum
- **Decide which campaign tools you will use.** Assign one person to be in charge of each tool
  - **Phone Calls**
  - **Letter Writing**
  - **Personal Meetings**
  - **Group Presentations**
  - **Publicity**

## 3. Recruit Help

Hold a meeting to recruit

workers and supporters



### Before the meeting

- Personally invite people and call them before the meeting
- Provide childcare, if you want parents to attend meetings or help with mailing, this will increase the participation
- The children can also help personalize letters or artwork enclosed with your letters or advocacy kits
- Involve students in all aspects of your advocacy efforts, from planning to implementation

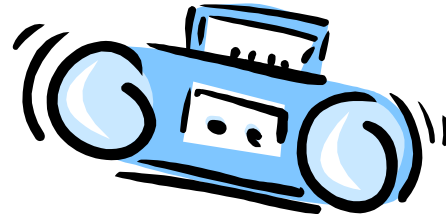
### During the meeting

- Introduce the importance of arts education
- Use language that makes it acceptable for people not to know anything about the arts. Encourage their questions.
- Pass out the fact and information sheets you created
- Have the attendees complete a Volunteer Information Form
- Have interested people sign up to help with a specific task before leaving
- Remember that Small Tasks + Many People = Results, so ask people to do something manageable: make twenty phone calls, address a hundred envelopes, write a letter, talk to a principal, help raise money, or host a meeting at home. Never overwhelm your team members.

## 4. Implement your Program

### Phone calls

- call potential supporters
  - use a phone tree or e-mail
  - review the information on your fact sheet
  - ask them to call or write the decision makers
- call key decision makers



### Letter writing

Write letters to key decision makers and to potential supporters.

### Personal meetings

Coordinate personal visits to each decision maker by those who have the most influence

### Group presentations

- Arrange brief presentations at meetings of community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, churches or social clubs.
- Pass out fact sheets and a sample letter with school board member's names and addresses, at school arts performances, booster club or other meetings, and open houses.

### Publicity

- Have a newspaper article written on an exciting way the arts are used in classrooms, on class field trips, or in special class projects or presentations.
- Use media contacts to generate articles, interviews and other coverage of your campaign.
- Raise community awareness through the following: public service announcements to radio, television and newspapers; action alert flyers to students and parents; student-generated posters; articles in organizational or school newsletters, or placing arts activities on the school lunch calendar; buttons.

### Tips for your phone calls, letters and meetings

- Be brief
- Designate one person to speak, if in a group
- Begin with an overview of why you are there
- State your case in full with supporting information
- Use language that makes your case accessible for people who do not know anything about the arts
- Use personal or local examples of the impact of the arts
- Repeat your campaign slogan throughout the meeting
- Encourage letters and phone calls to decision makers
- Thank them for their time
- Leave information on your case, contact information on the decision makers and contact information on you and your group

## 5. Continue the Support

**A good issue never dies.**

Even after you have made your effort, the issue will continue to exist.

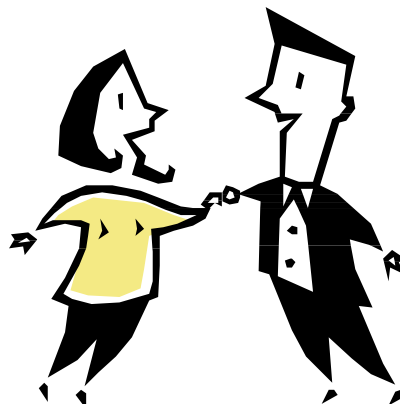
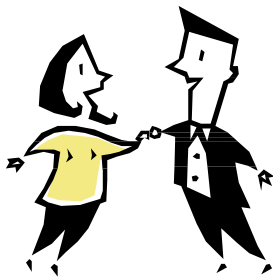


To keep the ground you have gained and to continue to effect change you will need to

- monitor the district's budgeting effort,
- attend school board meetings
- and develop on-going relationships with decision makers.

Please remember to **stay in touch with your campaign leader**, for you never know when the perfect moment to effect change or abate a crisis will occur.

And remember to make sure you thank all your supporters and the decision makers who took the time to hear your case.



# Target Decision Makers List

This form may be used when identifying the decision maker(s) for a particular issue. Select the category or person(s) who are making the decision in your situation, and complete the information.



For each “decision maker” note the individual(s) from your supporters who may have the ability to positively influence the decision maker. Educate your supporters on your issues and ask them to place a call to the decision maker.

## Potential Decision Makers

## Who Can Influence

### Local School Board

President:

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Members:

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

### School District Personnel

Superintendent:

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Director of Curriculum:

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

School Principals:

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

### Others

PTO/PTA Presidents, Civic Leaders, Spouses, etc:

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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State Senator:

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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State Representative:

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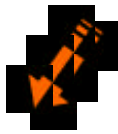
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# Phone Tree

In a telephone tree, the initiator calls the “branch” contact people with a message that they write down and read back (to check for accuracy). Each “branch” contact person then calls everyone on their list to read the message.



**Initiator**



**Contact Branch**

**Contact Branch**

**Contact Branch**

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# Volunteer Information Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Interests/ Abilities

- Helping to plan the arts education effort
- Speaking at public or organization meetings
- Talking with neighbors, parents or teachers about the effort
- Writing news releases
- Organizing mailings
- Helping with mailings
- Hosting a meeting
- Understanding and analyzing the school budget
- Raising money for the arts education effort
- Contributing money to the arts education effort
- Distributing flyers
- Organizing a letter writing campaign
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Personal Contacts *(please mention specific names)*

- School board \_\_\_\_\_
- School administrators \_\_\_\_\_
- Community/ civic groups \_\_\_\_\_
- Local business leaders \_\_\_\_\_
- Local artists/ arts groups \_\_\_\_\_
- Media \_\_\_\_\_
- Other key contacts \_\_\_\_\_

# Sample News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
(or "FOR RELEASE ON (date)")

For Further Information: (Name of contact person  
and daytime phone number)

(title)

(Body should be typed, double spaced, with one-inch margins on 8 ½" X 11" paper. The first paragraph should contain the most important facts : who, what, when, where and why. Include the rest of the information in descending order of importance in any following paragraphs. Keep it short and simple. Avoid jargon, slang, inside information or any other material that is likely to be misunderstood by the reader. Write in complete sentences and keep the language lively and clear. Limit the release to one page, if possible. If you need two pages, type "MORE" at the foot of the first page, and head page two with a short title in all capital letters and the words "ADD ONE".)

### (indicates end of release)

## Other Pointers

- Attach a personal note to the release to call attention to it.
- If possible, the media should have the release at least one week in advance of when you want it printed.
- Releases to broadcast media should be similar to the one above and be typed in all capital letters and triple-spaced. When the release is read aloud it should be either 30 or 60 seconds long and use a more conversational tone.
- Follow up your mailing of the press release with a phone call.



# Compelling Responses for Common Excuses



## **1.** Scheduling/Lack of Time



**Response:** A number of scheduling alternatives exist and are being used by schools. These alternatives include switching from a six-period to a seven-period day, offering courses on alternative days, or block scheduling. There is always a way to make time for the arts.

## **2.** Need to Concentrate on Raising Math and Science Test Scores



**Response:** The arts help to build critical thinking skills that are useful in math and science.

## **3.** Lack of Community Support and School Board Support



**Response:** Point out how the arts fit in with the school district's mission statement and educational philosophy. Recruit parents of arts students to advocate for your cause.

## **4.** Need to Cut Programs to Balance the Budget



**Response:** The average student load of arts teachers is greater than that of other teachers. By cutting an arts program, a district might actually have to hire more teachers to handle the student load.

## **5.** Arts Instructor is Weak



**Response:** Change or improve the personnel rather than discontinue the arts program. Put the interests of the students first.

# A CASE FOR ARTS EDUCATION

*“When I examine myself and my method of thought, I come to the conclusion that the gift of imagination [sic] has meant more to me than my talent for absorbing knowledge.”* Albert Einstein

To not include the arts as part of our basic education is to disconnect ourselves from our history, from the beauty that surrounds us, from other cultures and traditions, and from multiple forms of expression.

## WHY ARTS EDUCATION?

*In order to function in tomorrow’s world, students must be able to decode images, sounds and symbols. Literacy in “text” is not enough. Students will need the ability to analyze and evaluate visual and aural messages and make critical judgments. Training in the arts builds these essential interpretive skills.*

- Bill Ivey, Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts, 1998.

- ❖ The Arts promote critical thinking, problem solving and self-discipline, which can be applied to other subjects and can facilitate success in the workforce.
- ❖ The Arts nurture intellectual and imaginative growth because they enrich the spirit, deepen our sensibilities and instill important human values.
- ❖ The Arts increase self-awareness and self-esteem.

## EDUCATION GOALS

Students engaged in the arts continue to out perform their non-art peers on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), according to The College Entrance Examination Board. In 1995, SAT scores for students who studied the arts more than four years were **59 points higher on the verbal** and **44 points higher on the math** portion than students with no coursework or experience in the arts. - The College Board, Profile of SAT and Achievement Test Takers, 1995

- ❖ 25 out of 26 students in a typical primary classroom have visual/spatial and/or bodily/kinesthetic predominant learning strengths. Students with these learning strengths respond well to education delivered through visual arts and performing arts modes. - Adapted from *Learning* magazine, “Reach Every Student...”, 1996
- ❖ The arts engender enthusiasm and motivation for learning. The arts teach discipline, the value of sustained effort to achieve excellence, and the concrete rewards of hard work. All these factors can encourage higher attendance and decrease drop out rates. - Eloquent Evidence, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, and the National Endowment for the Arts, 1995

## CREATIVITY

All of us possess the capacity to be artistically expressive. Arts education requires students to draw upon their creative abilities and to deepen them as well. The benefit is that creative thinking, once learned, lasts for a lifetime and can be applied to other endeavors.

*“It takes more than textbooks to produce tomorrow’s mathematicians, scientists, and business leaders. It takes imagination. At McGraw-Hill, we believe that all students need grounding in the arts to stimulate creativity.”*

- McGraw Hill Advertisement 1996

## EMPLOYMENT

Skill requirements for all workers are going up, including those in production and support jobs. In the modern business environment, the ability to **communicate, adapt, diagnose problems and find creative solutions** is more important than ever before. These attributes can be nurtured and honed through studying the arts.

As we prepare for the 21st Century economy, the arts will play an important role by providing the necessary skills such as the **ability to manage resources, acquire and use information**, and the **ability to master different types of symbol systems**. The arts help students to build specific workplace skills to ensure employability, and the ability to make a solid economic contribution to our communities and to a state in which **the arts are a \$1.6 billion dollar business and support 56,342 jobs**. - 1995 New Mexico Cultural Resources Impact Assessment.

- ❖ Arts Education aids achievement of “core competencies” needed for employment according to a U.S. Labor Department report. The arts are cited as important for certain “foundation” skills which include thinking, creativity, problem solving, exercising individual responsibility, sociability, and self-esteem. - Eloquent Evidence, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and the NEA, 1995.
- ❖ Communication skills were ranked as the second most important factor in hiring according to a national study of employers. - Educational Quality of the Workforce National Employer Survey: First Findings, by Lisa Lynch and Robert Zemsky, 1995.
- ❖ An education in the arts opens doors to skills and abilities that equip learners for a host of learning contexts, including the workplace, where ‘knowledge is wealth’. - Educating the Workplace Through the Arts, Business Week, October 28, 1996.

*“At GE, we know that an education including the arts is vital. Because students who appreciate the conceptual as well as the analytical are the ones who’ll create the innovations of tomorrow.”*

- GE Advertisement 1996

## OURSELVES AND OTHERS

Projections about the demographic composition of the United States in the next 40 years show that the “minority” population will soon be the majority population. These projections have profound implications for educators, as they prepare students for tomorrow’s world.

- ❖ Students can not only better comprehend and value diverse people and cultures by studying the arts but can also demonstrate heightened self-esteem and self-concept. - Principal Research Findings 1987-1991 from the National Art Education Research Center.
- ❖ An education in the arts teaches students how to work cooperatively, and how to work out conflicting points of view. - Educating the Workplace Through the Arts, Business Week, October 28, 1996.
- ❖ Attitudes and perceptions toward Native Americans were changed through arts instruction. In Arizona, music and cultural experiences were effective in diminishing fourth grade students’ stereotypical views toward minority cultures. - North American Indian Music Instruction: Influences upon Attitudes, Cultural Perceptions, and Achievement, by Kay Louise Edwards, 1994.
- ❖ Self concept is positively enhanced through the arts according to a review of 57 studies, as are language acquisition, cognitive development, critical thinking ability and social skills. - The Effects of Arts and Music Education on Students’ Self-Concept, by Jerry Trusty and Giacomo M. Oliva, 1994.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

New Mexico Arts - 228 E.Palace Ave., Santa Fe, NM 87501 505-827-6490 or 1-800-879-4278  
New Mexico Alliance for Arts Education - 224 N. Campo, Las Cruces, NM 88001 505-523-6403  
New Mexico Parent Teacher Association - 3315 Louisiana Blvd. N.E., Albuquerque, NM 87110 505-881-0712  
New Mexico State Department of Education - 300 Don Gaspar, Santa Fe, NM 87501 505-827-6559