

THE CRITICAL LINK

The Critical Link is a quarterly newsletter featuring articles and resources on emerging issues related to arts education and promising practices from AEP's partnering organizations.

AEP is a national coalition of arts, education, business, philanthropic and government organizations that demonstrates and promotes the essential role of the arts in the learning and development of every child and in the improvement of America's schools.

The Partnership was formed in 1995 through a cooperative agreement among the **National Endowment for the Arts**, the **U.S. Department of Education**, the **National Assembly of State Arts Agencies**, and the **Council of Chief State School Officers**.

Message from the Director, Richard Deasy

A number of important resources for arts educators and advocates are highlighted in this issue of *The Critical Link*. The U.S. Department of Education continues its efforts to stress the role of the arts in a comprehensive education of all children and in meeting the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). In March, the department devoted its monthly television program *Education News Parents Can Use* to giving guidance to parents on actions they can take to support arts education in their schools. Former Education Secretary Rod Paige and Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas published a commentary in the widely circulated *Education Week* issue of January 26 pointing

out the benefits of the arts for all students. Governor Huckabee, who is the chairman of the Education Commission of the States, has launched a two-year initiative at ECS to advise governors, state legislators, chief state school officers, and other state leaders on the importance of state policies supporting arts education. AEP is working with ECS on the initiative and I am honored to serve on the Governor's Advisory Commission. We also describe below resources showing how the arts meet the literacy needs of high school students – a major new focus of federal and state policy. Web site addresses for these activities and resources are provided throughout the newsletter.

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(Past newsletters are stored in the archive)

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Targets of Opportunity:

- National Endowment for the Arts Teacher Institutes, deadline for proposals March 30, 2005 <http://teacher-institute.cqweb.org>
- AEP National Forum, June 24-25, 2005 U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC, Theme: Adolescents and the Arts

Washington Watch: Federal Arts and Education Update

On Tuesday evening, March 15, 2005 the U.S. Department of Education held one of its monthly live TV broadcasts of Education News Parents Can Use. *Arts Education: Improving Students' Academic and Performance* was the theme for the one hour broadcast which was viewed in 119 sites via satellite in 37 states nationwide. Dr. Susan Sclafani, the Department of Education's Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education was interviewed during the opening segment about issues ranging from why the arts are considered part of the core curriculum in NCLB, to misperceptions about the arts in the federal law, and what research says about the relationships of arts learning to cognitive and social development. She spoke eloquently about these issues and highlighted AEP's *Critical Links* compendium of research. Additional speakers included a taped interview with Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas, current chairman of ECS; Joan Ashcraft of Tucson's Opening Minds through the Arts program; Anthony Jackson of DC's Arts and Technology Academy; Connie Boleman from Saluda River Academy in Columbia, SC who received

the Department of Education's American Star Teacher award in 2004; Mike Blakeslee of MENC: The National Association for Music Education; Lee Ann Powell of the Mississippi Arts Commission; and Maureen Gallagher of the Access to Theatre program in Boston. Debbie Allen, actor and choreographer, joined the broadcast live from the Kennedy Center. The program was intended to give guidance to parents and others interested in improving arts education on actions they could take. The panelists urged involvement in addressing the cost of programming, effective leadership, quality assessment, documenting impact, adequate professional development, and strong partnerships with community arts organizations and artists. A primary message was that parents need to band together and be proactive with schools in their area to demand quality arts education. A number of resources were listed on screen for assistance. The broadcast may be viewed on the Department of Education's web site at www.connectlive.com/events/ednews. For further information, visit www.ed.gov and click on Parents/ News Parents Can Use.

Spotlight on Research

The Arts Education Partnership released a new report in January describing youth directed arts programs that are creating powerful and supportive communities among young people. *You Want To Be A Part of Everything: The Arts, Community, and Learning* is the result of a national AEP forum held at Lincoln Center in New York City in September, 2003. The forum featured five youth arts partnerships who engaged participants in activities and discussions that reflect the role of the arts in building positive learning communities. These partnerships include Human Creativity from Central Falls, RI; ArtsLiteracy based at Brown University in Providence, RI; the Center of Creative Arts' Urban Arts Program in St. Louis, MO; Artists for Humanity in Boston, MA; and City Lore from New York City. Each partnership demonstrates community building through the arts as an intentional feature of its activities. Community in this case is based upon the positive and productive social interactions embedded in mutual

understanding and respect. AEP's compendium of research, *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development* reveals that experiences in the arts empower students to develop a sense of identity and self-direction as well as attitudes of empathy, tolerance, and cooperation. At the forum, young people took part in panel discussions as well as activities that engaged attendees in a community building activity, and shared their thoughts during small group sessions. *You Want To Be A Part of Everything* captures their voices as well as the essence of their learning and engagement through the arts. The report also features a transcript of a panel presentation with ArtsLiteracy leaders and students which engaged participants through stories, chorus statements, and the history and processes of the ArtsLit project. For further information, see the side bar or visit the AEP web site.

News from the Field

In June, 2004 AEP held a forum focused on the arts and its implications for literacy development. Two panels of respected scholars and practitioners from the arts and education fields were assembled to discuss traditional and emerging literacy definitions and contexts. The discussions began with notions of traditional language and literacy, but quickly led to the rich connections between the arts and literacy. Among the most challenging issues that arose from these conversations was the concern that adolescents have very different needs than that of elementary-aged learners. Too often literacy is considered the realm of the early grades due to the need to get students reading in the primary years. But building literacy is a complex and continuous process. All agreed that the arts play a crucial and connective role for students at this level. So what are some key concepts that arts educators should keep in mind when addressing the literacy needs in this age group? One thing to keep in mind is that literacy development

occurs across disciplines, and educators should keep in mind the daily life of students, both in and out of the classroom. In particular, there is abundant evidence that after-school programs are ripe for advancing literacy development across learning domains. The importance of building on students' own cultural practices is another key dimension to consider in the teen years. In this case, related findings on students' identity and its importance at this level make a similar connection. Adolescence is the time when learners begin to ask big questions about themselves, their family, and their community. These are issues that are well illustrated in the recent AEP publication, *You Want to Be A Part of Everything* (see *Spotlight on Research* in this issue.) AEP plans to focus more on this conversation at its June, 2005 forum which will focus on the theme of Adolescents and the Arts.

Suggested Resources on...the Arts and Literacy

Literacy Through Photography at Duke University
<http://cds.aas.duke.edu/ltp/>

The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards (for grades 7-12)
<http://www.scholastic.com/artandwritingawards/about.htm>

The ArtsLiteracy Project at Brown University
www.artslit.org/

"Drama Literacy: Center Stage" in *Currents in Literacy* (newsletter of the Hood Children's Literacy Project)
http://www.lesley.edu/academic_center/hood/currentshome.html

We need your feedback! Send AEP your suggestions, questions or comments about *The Critical Link* by email to: aep@ccsso.org

Featured AEP Publication

Name: You Want To Be A Part of Everything: The Arts, Community, and Learning

Year: 2005

Cost: \$4.00 plus shipping

Description: Features provocative testimony to youth directed arts programs that are creating powerful and supportive communities among young people. It highlights five youth arts programs from across the country brought together at an AEP forum in September, 2003. (26 pp.)

How to obtain a copy:
Visit <http://www.aep-arts.org> and click on "Publications"

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