



*Advancing Art Education*

**U.S. Department of Education  
Arts Education Stakeholders' Forum – January 20, 2010  
Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**

**Comments from R. Barry Shauck, President  
National Art Education Association**

Good Afternoon. I am Barry Shauck, President of the National Art Education Association, the professional education association for art educators. Our members include pre-kindergarten through high school teachers of the visual arts; administrators; professors and researchers within higher education; art museum educators and artists.

On behalf of our nation's 90,000+ visual arts educators, I would like to thank Secretary Duncan and the U.S. Department of Education for convening this stakeholders' forum regarding the importance of arts education relative to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

I'd like to briefly highlight several key points to what NAEA refers to as Learning in a Visual Age, and underscore the critical importance of visual arts education as a core subject. Every day, American young people spend more than four hours watching television, DVDs or videos, one hour using a computer; and 48 minutes playing video games. In many cases, youths are engaged in two or more of these activities at the same time. Little wonder this era has become known as the "digital age."

And yet - it might be equally accurate to refer to the current era as a *visual age*. Although many digital tools rely on sound and text, most disseminate images, and youths who spend a third of their waking hours in front of a screen are saturated with images. The pervasive presence of images in the lives of our students has transformed the way they learn and perceive the world. Their use of images has created a demand for new skills to enable all young people to make sense of the visual world.

These circumstances have also transformed the workplace. Aesthetics and creativity are just as important as technical knowledge in the new economy. In that "flat" world

journalist Tom Friedman described in his book, *The World is Flat*, Friedman says, “The secret sauce comes from our ability to integrate art, music, and literature with the hard sciences”. “That’s what produces an iPod Revolution or (results in a search engine like) a Google.”

These visual circumstances place a premium on the abilities visual arts educators develop in their students: visual-spatial abilities, reflective thinking about the relationship of parts to the whole, and experimentation. Schools and their community partners are strengthened when the content area of visual arts education is integrated into other areas of learning.

It is in this context that we underscore the critical leadership role of the U.S. Department of Education in ensuring that all students are guaranteed access to a quality education. The following recommendations are presented for your consideration:

**1. First - Continue to support and value the arts as a core subject within ESEA reauthorization.**

**2. Second - Champion the need to incorporate the arts into STEM initiatives by changing STEM to STEAM. Turning up the heat a little and placing a public value on the importance of the arts.**

We want to keep the United States and what it stands for along with the public purposes for democracy in service to both others around the world and to our citizenry. To do that creativity and innovation as delivered through artful and elegant challenges to students in the arts – the teaching of creativity and innovation - cannot be relegated to secondary status behind science, technology, engineering and mathematics, especially when thought leaders like Daniel Pink have proven the essential role of the arts as the driver for creativity and innovation so vital for our collective economic and intellectual contributions to the future.

**3. Third - Ensure that a comprehensive education in all of the arts – visual arts, music, dance, and theatre – is accessible to all students and expand ongoing, reliable data collection about both access to and learning in all arts content and instructional areas.**

The U.S. Department of Education can increase its efforts to make sure that the arts are included in all regularly conducted research and data collection regarding the core academic subjects so that information about the actual status of arts education in our nation’s schools is accurate and up-to-date and so that the arts are in a position of leadership to share creative ways to develop minds through carefully planned curriculum

initiatives and arts content specific professional development **under the Title II program..**

**4. Fourth - Disseminate the findings of research on model programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education, and include research on arts assessment. Encourage states to demonstrate the extent to which they incorporate arts assessment in their evolving plans to refine teaching and learning.**

I'm pleased to present copies of the NAEA publication *Learning in a Visual Age: The Critical Importance of Visual Arts Education* as part of NAEA's testimony today.

Thank you.

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