

National Art Education Association's "WHERE'S THE ART?" CAMPAIGN

At the first General Session in Miami Beach, NAEA President Mac Arthur Goodwin announced a Where's the Art? Campaign as the next steps to the national art education report released in March 2001, *Visual Arts Education: Setting An Agenda For Improving Student Learning*.

"The purpose of the campaign," said Goodwin, "is to bring national attention to the arts education policy deficiencies and the effects they have on the nation's young citizenry. More specifically, we wish to encourage the press/media, legislators, and parents to generate public understanding of the importance of art education policies that lead to student learning in art."

"To guide the *Agenda* we researched the extent arts education policies were in place that would enable student learning in art in the nation's schools. We found deficiencies in policies and programs that excluded many students and, in other examples, children are simply being left behind," stated Goodwin.

"For example," said Goodwin, "about half of our elementary schools have no art teachers. When children do not master basic visual arts knowledge and skills in their elementary schooling, it may be caused by the lack of substantive, standards based art instruction. As a result, students enter middle, junior and senior high schools with first and second grade art skills. They become 'remedial' art students. Thus students—and their teachers, play 'catch up' for their remaining years of schooling. Learning requires sustained effort—studying a subject over time, building on knowledge in a sequential fashion, gaining a historical perspective, and developing a certain level of subject mastery such as those recommended in state and local curriculum frameworks."

"American schools have made incredible gains that focus on student learning in art. Most states have identified art knowledge and skills students should learn and thousands of art teachers have redesigned their curriculum and realigned their instructional practices. School districts and universities are working together on new professional development and continuing education programs. Yet, 95% of the states do not conduct statewide assessments in the arts. How are we to know if our students are learning?"

In another example, "we found thirty-four states do not license or certify art teachers based on specific art standards. It is a myth to think anyone can teach art that has not mastered art education content, knowledge, and skills. Good art teachers know how to guide and encourage student learning, how to plan productive lessons and diagnose students' problems, as well as knowing the art content to be taught."

Other highlights of the findings are:

- Thirty-five percent of the higher education institutions computing GPA's count arts grades.
- Eleven states require arts for university admissions.
- Thirty-three states and nearly 60% of public secondary schools require arts as a part of graduation requirements.
- Eighty-eight percent of the states have an arts education mandate.

One way to increase the probability that something will not be learned is to ensure that it will not be taught. Thus, large and important legacies of art and culture go unseen, unheard, unread, unstudied, and unlearned, and many of our children are being left behind.

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“Because we share a common goal: improving student learning,” said Goodwin, “I also call upon other education organizations and education legislators, departments of education, school boards, principals, and parents to embrace the agenda.”

“To accomplish this will require substantive collaboration among education stakeholders and policymakers centered on improving student art learning. It will also require the support and commitment of many groups within the Association to initiate innovative activities in their states and regions that focus on improving policies for student learning in art.”

What Can You Do?

- Lead efforts to generate public understanding of the ideas behind the importance of art education policies that lead to student learning in art.
- Develop services that orient your constituents to art education policies needed to achieve student art learning.
- Implement leadership strategies to advance education policies for quality art learning.

What Can Parents Do?

- Encourage the press/media to generate public understanding of the importance of art education policies that lead to student learning in art.
- Encourage your school board to support better policies for art education programs that lead to student learning in art.
- Discuss/recommend improved art education policies with your child’s school principal.
- Devote time at a PTA meeting to review how art education policies can enhance the quality of art education for all students. Develop support activities through the PTA.

What Can School Board Members Do?

- Ensure that district education policies promote K-12 art study as basic education for all students.
- Adopt education policies that include high levels of accomplishment in the visual arts.
- Make quality teaching and student art learning a critical part of your district improvement efforts.
- Develop policies that require rigorous professional development and continuing education programs for those who teach the arts disciplines.

What Can Governors, Legislators, and State Officials Do?

- Ensure that state education policies promote K-12 art study as basic education for all students.
- Adopt education requirements/regulations/statutes that include high levels of accomplishment in the visual arts.
- Maintain policies that require rigorous professional development and continuing education programs at the graduate levels for those who teach the arts disciplines.
- Include study of the arts disciplines in all presentations of state goals and policies for elementary and secondary education.
- Support the development of a state inventory of effective art education policies to encourage comparison to current practice and make appropriate adjustments when current policies do not seem congruent with national standards.

What Can State Art Education Associations Do?

- Lead efforts to generate public understanding of the ideas behind the importance of art education policies that lead to student learning in art.
- Develop services that orient members to art education policy development, especially those policies needed to achieve student learning.
- Implement advocacy strategies for (1) higher education, (2) state education agencies, and (3) local school districts to advance education policies for quality art learning.

What Can Arts Councils Do?

- Encourage the press/media to generate public understanding of the importance of art education policies that lead to student learning in art.
- Advocate state education policies that promote K-12 art study as basic education for all students.
- Advocate education requirements/regulations/statutes that include high levels of accomplishment in the visual arts.
- Recognize teachers/schools/districts/agencies/legislators who successfully implement arts education policies i.e., requirements/regulations/statutes that include high levels of accomplishment in the visual arts.