

## Let The Debate Begin; But Only To The Extent That The Debate Leads To A Shared Vision of Education Excellence

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These are exciting times for arts education. At the time of the preparation of this *Advisory*, the Senate and the House versions of *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* are in committee for reconciliation. However, all indications suggest that the bill will be approved during this Congressional Session.

Are you aware that *Goals 2000* specifies seven national goals for the year 2000, including a 90 percent high school graduation rate and competency in grades 4, 8, and 12 in English, Mathematics, Science, Foreign Languages, Civics and Governments, Arts, History, and Geography? The bill also sets voluntary national education standards for student and school performance and authorizes \$427 million in FY'94 and proposed \$700 million for FY'95 for states to reform elementary and secondary education. The inclusion of the arts as a subject goal for students to achieve competency will have significant impact on arts education in public schools.

Are you aware that as a result of *Goals 2000* and new legislative emphasis on arts education, *The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) for 1994* includes specific arts-in-education funding for the first time? The bill includes funds for model projects in the arts for individuals with disabilities through the Very Special Arts, and support for model projects and programs in the performing arts in the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Funding for actual arts education programs is reallocated through the Department of Education to the Kennedy Center, whose "Alliance for Arts Education" creates and supports model arts programs in Washington, D. C. and throughout the country. The ESEA draft bill also expends the Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program (for math and science) to include teacher training under certain conditions in all of the core subjects in *Goals 2000*, including the arts.

Are you aware that *The Community Arts Partnership Act* amends the ESEA Act by establishing a \$50 million demonstration grant program? The Department of Education will administer this program that seeks to improve the educational performance and future potential of at-risk children and youth in the schools; cultural programs that encourage the active participation of parents in their children's education; and aims to provide multi-year services to at-risk children and youth, integrate community cultural resources in the regular curriculum, and facilitate school-to-work transition from secondary and alternative schools to job training, higher education and employment. The bill authorizes \$50 million for FY'94 and \$75 million for FY'95.

*Goals 2000* not only adds the arts to the national education goals, but presents significant funding possibilities for arts education. These are interesting times for the arts because we now have national voluntary standards for arts education. If that's not enough, possibilities exist for funding under *The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* for those subjects that are included in the National Educational Goals. These initiatives have created a national agenda that makes for exciting yet anxious times. These are indeed challenging times. As arts educators debate the national agenda for the arts education, crystal clear challenges are emerging for the field.

My assessment of this agenda and emerging challenges are based on the perspectives that I bring to the debate as an Education Associate with a State Department of Education, a member of the Visual Arts Standards Task Force, a member of the National Assessment of Educational Progress Arts Assessment Framework Consensus Committee and the National Director of the NAEA Supervision and Administration Division. Now that the arts are included in the national education goals and we have national voluntary standards, what is next?

It is critical that the arts education community keep abreast of the initiatives that compose the national agenda for education for the 21st Century, particularly those that have implications for arts education. More importantly, the arts education community must become knowledgeable of the existing infrastructure in their respective states and local communities that can help to operationalize the intent of the allocations under those initiatives that compose the education agenda for the 21st Century. No two states or local communities are the same. Thus, arts educators must contemplate the following questions in relation to their respective communities. What infrastructure exists at the state and/or local levels to facilitate development and implementation of strategies that will promote unfolding the initiatives that composed the national arts education agenda in a manner that will contribute to education reform? What leadership exists at the local and state levels? How can the existing leadership be influenced to ensure that these initiatives unfold in a substantive manner?

This *Advisory* is a call to action to the arts education community. So let the debate begin, but only to the extent that the debate leads to a shared vision for education excellence. However, it is critical that the arts education community not only participate in the debate, but the community must set agendas and implement proactive strategies to ensure that the vision set forth by *Goals 2000* and the national voluntary standards are realized in a manner that is beneficial to the education of our young citizenry. Now that the arts are included in the national education goals and we have national voluntary standards, what is next?

*Goals 2000* and the national voluntary standards for the arts have created a national agenda that makes for exciting yet anxious times for the arts education community. It is exciting to realize that a national agenda exists for arts education. The following are among significant questions that the education must address to ascertain maximum benefits for the initiatives that compose the National Arts Education Agenda. What is the role of the State Education Agency? What is the role of the State Arts Agency? What is the role of higher education institutions? What is the role of professional associations? What is the role of the community? What are the roles of school administrators, teachers, students, and parents? How can a shared vision be formulated that will promote education excellence? As the arts education community debates the national agenda for the arts in education, the extent to which arts education is advanced as a result of these initiatives is dependent directly upon the extent to which arts educators provocatively participate in the promulgation and implementation of strategies that ensure these initiatives unfold in a manner that is beneficial to the education of our young citizenry. So let the debate begin, but only to the extent that the debate leads to a shared vision for educational excellence.