

INTEGRATING THE ARTS AND EDUCATION REFORM:

The Ford Foundation's Vision of Quality Public Schools

Supported jointly by Education and Arts and Culture grant makers, this initiative is grounded in the belief that the arts have transformative and educational power. Arts education has been shown to improve student outcomes, nurture creativity, assist in complex problem-solving and build discipline and teamwork. Long concerned that the quality of public schooling in the United States is uneven with this initiative, the Ford Foundation seeks to channel the power of arts learning to promote greater equity in a multi-cultural, multi-class society by engaging and affirming cultural differences within and among communities.

At the heart of the Ford Foundation's vision of public schools is the establishment of a broader and more meaningful definition of high quality education that integrates the arts as a central component of learning. Reform practices today focus on standards, accountability, and testing. The Ford Foundation, however, holds a broader view of education reform that realizes arts education as integral to quality public education.

The advantages of a rich arts education curriculum are embodied in:

- A more challenging, richer curriculum across subjects and a broader "core curriculum" that includes the arts;
- Classroom instruction and school practices that effectively engage all students in learning;
- The opportunity for all students to contribute to the production and sharing of meaning and knowledge;
- Greater respect for cultural differences and diverse life experiences among students, educators and communities.

Towards Establishing a Broader Vision: The Arts Education Initiative

Our Goals:

- To significantly improve outcomes and opportunities for large numbers of urban public school students by fostering integrated arts education practices across school systems;
- To help build the widespread view that arts education is an essential part of a high quality public school education.

Our Strategies

- Demonstrate that arts content and pedagogy can be integrated in a sustained way across large numbers of schools in urban systems.
- Build broader public understanding and community will for integrated arts education through research and communications.

How to Get There:

The Ford Foundation believes that there are several key components to establishing this broader vision for public education. The Foundation places a particular emphasis in the following areas:

Collaboration—A partnership model of arts education and a complementary strategy to build public understanding, support, and effective advocacy; the inclusion of groups traditionally outside the power structure; willing system leadership; and strengthened system support capacity to improve student outcomes.

Research— Building further knowledge on the benefits and limits of integrated arts education practices in schools and of the effects of large-scale strategies to integrate arts education across systems. Through research and program evaluation we are better able to critically examine the success of the initiative.

Communications—For clarifying the current status of public opinion, further educating the public and building public support for local advocacy.

Grant making:

The Ford Foundation is making a sustained and long-term investment to realize the vision of arts education in public schools. As part of this effort we are:

- Supporting eight sites over five years in Alameda County, CA., Baltimore, Cleveland, Dallas, Jackson MS, St. Louis, University of California, Berkeley and Washington, DC;
- Providing site-level communications support to implement initiative-wide and site-level communications strategies with the assistance of Douglas Gould & Company;
- Providing funding to the Education Commission of the States to inform and build support among state educational policy leaders and governors;
- Building partnerships with the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning, Arts Education Partnership, artists, performers and other key stakeholders to improve capacity building of arts education organizations.

Indicators of Success

In Demonstration Districts

- Improved student outcomes in schools implementing reforms
- Evidence of widespread integration of the arts into classrooms
- Strengthened local capacity to support and sustain arts integration
- Sustainable collaborations of community groups, education advocates, arts institutions and educators
- Greater public understanding, support and effective advocacy for integrated arts education
- Increased local philanthropic and public resources

Nationally

- Expanding knowledge about the educational benefits of integrated arts education in research publications
- Broader public understanding about how arts are a basic part of public education
- Increased support by policymakers, demonstrated by an increased policy discourse for arts education with an emphasis on new policies to support programs at state and local levels

For more information please visit www.fordfound.org and www.keepartsinschools.org