

Los Angeles County Arts Commission
Arts Education Roundtable
Practical Strategies for a Changing Economy
May 13, 2009, 1:00 – 4:00 pm
Dorothy Chandelier Pavilion

On May 13, fifty-five members of the Los Angeles arts education community gathered to participate in facilitated conversations around concrete strategies for leading arts education organizations and programs during this challenging time.

Ayanna Hudson Higgins, Director of Arts Education, *Arts for All: LA County Regional Blueprint for Arts Education*, made opening comments and thanked the Music Center Education Department for co-hosting the event. She informed participants, representing 48 different arts education providers, that the day was about giving arts education providers the space to reflect on their work and the field of arts education in light of the current changing economy. Ayanna then turned the conversation over to Liz Lindsley of the California Alliance for Arts Education who facilitated the day's conversations. Liz Lindley framed the day by giving a short description of the sessions and asking participants to come to the table with open-mindedness, acceptance, curiosity, discovery, sincerity and brevity. The day's schedule consisted of three main sessions:

- 1) **Trend Analysis** – Analysis of current trends in arts education in the context of current economic and educational changes
- 2) **Conversation Cafés** – 3 rounds of in-depth facilitated conversations with colleagues around the topics of mission & strategic planning, programming and funding & administrative practices.
- 3) **Consensus Workshop** – open conversation for all participants around what innovative, practical strategies arts education organizations can use in light of current trends.

Trend Analysis

The facilitator posed the following questions.

- What is presenting itself in the world of arts education and education in general?
- What is on the rise?
- What is established?
- What is outdated, disappearing?

Participants then worked with a partner to identify answers and then posted them on the wall for discussion. The ideas put forth fell into the following categories:

TRENDS ANALYSIS WAVE

HORIZON	ESTABLISHED
EMERGING	DISAPPEARING
<p style="text-align: center;">HORIZON</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Which new ideas or practices are "way out there" but gaining some attention?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Federal Arts leadership ▪ Short-term performance evaluation ▪ Non-teacher professional expertise ▪ Secondary school reform ▪ Career tech ▪ Accreditation for teaching artists ▪ High quality sequential ▪ Merit pay ▪ Extended school day ▪ Access for all students ▪ Program collaboration – sharing resources when have similar goals ▪ Social media technology in schools ▪ Transcultural programming ▪ National standards ▪ Artistic inclination in children is identified and encouraged ▪ All Arts included in teacher education ▪ Credentialed arts educators 	<p style="text-align: center;">ESTABLISHED</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Which trends and practices are mainstream or standard operating procedures?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Arts Education at secondary level is elective and talent based ▪ Standardized testing ▪ Arts Taught as enrichment only ▪ Arts funded externally ▪ Arts education is mostly in primary grade levels ▪ Instruction is not project based or experiential ▪ Reform fatigue ▪ Traditional models for schools – set standards for class size, ▪ Different learning styles ▪ Teaching to the test ▪ Content Standards ▪ Regional coordination
<p style="text-align: center;">EMERGING</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Which trends and practices are picking up momentum and acceptance?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teaching arts alone or integrated? ▪ Considering students with special needs ▪ Educational foundations for school support ▪ Artists training teachers ▪ Measurable goals and objectives ▪ Digital technology and speed ▪ Family engagement ▪ Arts education as a part of alternative education ▪ Assessment based programs ▪ Arts relevance to students, community and education ▪ Professional development for non-arts teacher understanding ▪ Universal standards and practices for teaching artists ▪ Arts as economic stimulus ▪ Charter School Movement ▪ Arts not cut to balance budgets ▪ Democratization of art form so accessible to classroom teachers 	<p style="text-align: center;">DISAPPEARING</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Which trends and practices are no longer relevant and considered outdated?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Money for field trips ▪ Time to teach – scheduling is encroached upon ▪ Study of arts for its own sake ▪ Don't ask, don't tell for workers comp. for teaching artist ▪ Certainty of arts in schools ▪ Teacher created curriculum ▪ Value for the arts ▪ Zero tolerance, militaristic model of student discipline ▪ Foundational giving for the arts – foundations are moving towards social services

Participants were then asked to reflect on the ideas that had been posted on the wall. Further questions were posed by the facilitator to dig deeper into the ideas on the wall.

What is missing?

- Charter school movement
- Principal or CEO controlled schools
- Arts included in teacher education
- Arts for All – not just access, but making sure all kids are required to have arts education as an experience (horizon)
- Regional coordination – established (structure of arts for all across all districts in LA and the state)
- Arts not on chopping block to balance budgets – emerging

Which trends are the most powerful forces this group needs to deal with in arts education?

- The established column, we all work against the established issues and challenges within testing and hours.
- Nature of artist is to be creative and problem solving, not just about how well students test and allocate space.

- While *Arts for All* is established and emerging, having policies and plans in school districts is emerging
- From an advocacy perspective, career tech education should be included. Horizon would include elements that are not being advocated for or on the policy piece.

Other key forces:

- The economy is the elephant in the room. For example programs are going away as district funding goes away. School paying for arts services seems to be going away without any plan for replacement. The stress is also within the school district, there is fall out for other areas as well.
- Arts are still seen as extra curricular activities.
- Administrative focus on service – peer mentorship or leadership (i.e. Americorp) and potential to collaborate within a service framework.

What here is working against us?

- Money is one piece, and value is the companion piece. Value seems to be what is disappearing, not funding.
- Several foundations have announced they are changing guidelines to make social services more of a priority (Weingart).
- Technology is against us, speed, and quick information. Art is a process that needs to be incubated. We are on a speed trip.
- Reform fatigue in schools. We are just yet another reform idea, and schools assume that this too shall pass.

What is working for us?

- Federal arts leadership
- Access for all students
- Independent charter school movement
- Family engagement – opinion surveys show family members value arts education more than corporations and policymakers.
- Value for arts is also emerging
- Technology issues on horizon, the global economy is increasing the arts value as a connection between financial and economic success.
- Also on horizon, all arts in teacher education
- Arts not only path to personal economic success, but also that artists have a stimulative effect on their communities (restaurants, and business are drawn to it)
- Artists training teachers

Conversation Cafés

For the second part of the meeting, participants participated in Conversation Cafés. Each participant took part in three small group conversations on the following topics:

- 1) Mission/Strategic Planning,
- 2) Programming
- 3) Funding and Administrative Practices.

Each conversation was sparked by a quote and some guiding questions. Talking points gathered from these conversations are included.

Mission / Strategic Planning

“Taking artistic risks, increasing attendance, fostering access, improving artistic quality, deepening engagement, balancing the budget, and hitting earned and unearned income targets, do not necessarily go hand in hand.

We can kid ourselves into thinking that we can pursue these goals simultaneously and without compromise by separating into different departments the functions of making the art, selling admissions, raising money, balancing the budget, educating patrons, and understanding the community. But the compartmentalization of mission is only a short-term alleviation of the genuine philosophical struggle to balance these competing goals. And prioritizing and balancing these goals is only likely to get more difficult given the economic climate.

When I was at On the Boards in Seattle we were in the midst of the post-dot-com-bust post-9/11 recession and a funder advised us, "Focus on your core and let go of the rest." It was good advice for us at the time.

Diane Ragsdale, “Surviving the Culture Change”

1. What is your organization’s or department’s core mission? Why do you exist?
2. What strategy have you adopted to fulfill your mission/vision?
3. What are you using as measures of success? What are you aiming for?
4. Are we getting the outcomes we anticipated?
5. What could be a better strategy at this point?

Notes from participant conversation:

- Is everyone in your organization interpreting the mission in the same way (board members, staff members, teaching artists)?
- Use strategic planning to get everyone on same page
- How can organizations use partnerships & collaborations to serve their mission
 - Forging partnerships outside of the box (i.e. teacher unions, parent groups)
 - Sustained quality relationships vs. quantity
 - Partnerships to share human resources – this is where organizations are hurting the most
 - Shared volunteer program
- Measuring organizations goals and outcomes
 - Is the data organizations are collecting really relevant to their mission (i.e. college acceptance rates, graduation rates)?
 - What data do we need to collect in order to authentically translate the story to funders?

- Is simply giving a child an arts experience a valid goal? How can organizations measure the experience?
- What are the new ways we can deliver programs that still meet our organizational mission
 - Using technology to bring performances to students (i.e. recording performance for dissemination)

Programming

The late, great thinker Susan Sontag once wrote, "Existence is no more than the precarious attainment of relevance in an intensely mobile flux of past, present, and future." I take particular note of the words, "precarious attainment of relevance." No organization can be granted relevance in perpetuity based on its laurels or the size of its endowment. To exist, to thrive, to be artistically vibrant in the 21st century, arts organizations may need to adapt to this culture change in order to attain, maintain, or regain, their relevancy."

Diane Ragsdale, "Surviving the Culture Change"

1. Who are you serving and what do they want?
2. How have their needs changed since you started working in arts education?
3. What are you offering that is relevant to their current wants/needs?
4. What are you offering that is no longer relevant to their interests?
5. How might your programming need to shift?
6. How might you change the way you interact with schools and districts? With students?

Notes from participant conversation:

- Deeper impact, smaller focal points
- Using free programming to develop relationships
- Relevancy
 - Becoming relevant according to current economic changes and changes on the education landscape
 - Having open dialogues with the communities being served
 - Listening to the needs of those the organizations are servicing
 - Are the diverse communities being served?
 - With the challenges of the diverse communities of LA, how do we work to define program relevancy?
 - How do arts organizations work to integrate with academic curriculums?
 - Not being everything to everybody; rather, what do you do best
- Collaboration & Partnerships
 - Collaboration between arts organization and school leadership
 - Acting as a support system for teachers (i.e. long term professional development, teacher in-service programs)
 - Develop relationships with individual principals

Funding & Administrative Practices

1. Where are the biggest changes in your funding or income sources?
2. What choices have you made to deal with these realities?
3. Where are you still really stuck?

Consider the system

The increasingly common awareness of “blurring boundaries” and “boundary crossing” between nonprofit and commercial, amateur and professional, structured and informal may be a sign that those perceived boundaries and distinctions are no longer productive. In a world where audiences, artists, schools, and communities are much more fluid in their expression and experience of arts and culture, it will be more important than ever to understand the whole, as well as the parts. Even for organizations that focus on a segment of the larger system – the nonprofit or public arts, for example – positive change will increasingly come from more thoughtful connections of that segment to its larger system.

Andrew Taylor for AMS Consulting, Renegotiation” An Overview of U.S. Arts Industry Insights, 2003-2007

4. What words or phrases stand out for you in this quote?
5. What excites you about what is being said?
6. How can we collaborate to address our challenges?
7. Looking ahead, what other connections could we make to build momentum and income?

Notes from participant conversation:

- Dealing with foundational funding and endowments cuts
 - Furloughs, salary reductions, staff cuts
 - Cutting programs not relevant to mission
 - Transitioning from a contributed income model to an earned income model
- How do we balance what is good for business and what is good the arts community
- Look for new channels through which to apply for funding
 - Planning grants
 - Grants geared toward partnership and joint programs (i.e. dance companies and museums applying for Target free concert series)
 - Funding through parent organizations
- Partnerships outside of school districts
 - Commercial enterprises
 - Libraries
 - Hospitals
 - Adult Programs
- How are changes in infrastructure affecting programming?
- Duplication of services
 - Map service delivery of programs – which organizations are serving which communities?
 - Are students getting equity, access and quality?
 - Great source of information for possible partnerships and sharing of resources

Consensus Workshop

What innovative, practical strategies can arts education organizations utilize to respond to the current fiscal crisis and shifts in the field of education?

Participants were asked to first individually brainstorm and then as a table present the 3 strongest ideas. The following was charted:

What innovative, practical strategies can arts ed. organizations utilize to respond to the current fiscal crisis & shift in the field of education?					
Think strategically about collaborations	Actively Advocate	Think about new ways your programming can serve your audience	Focus on the core mission	Open lines of communication	Tap into many different funding pools
Be proactive with regard to partnerships and funding commitments	Use the CCESSA Toolkits on advocacy	Map our programs: is there duplication of services and where?	Re-evaluate the core mission	Use technology to reach audience	Diversify revenue streams
Collaborate wider and better across the Community	Become an active participant in the advocacy networks	Diversify in geographic boundaries	Remember your passion	Utilize social media	Take advantage of stimulus money
Communication and collaborate with all genres of arts ed.	Schedule a time to address the local school boards at a meeting	Create programs that utilize resources schools already have, namely, focus on teachers by offering arts based teacher development	Task risks	Share with your audience the creation of your content	School pay for arts
Forge strategic and unexpected partnerships		Teachers training artists and artists training teachers			
Build development relationships with commercial interests		Artist's work is against the establishment - creative solutions			

What stands out?

- Imagination and staying as imaginative as the art in our administrative duties
- Mission and quality are paramount
- Creating an exemplary and high quality programs, the other stuff will come.
- Collective action stands out. Each conversation has been around that, around forging something new within scarcity.
- We are all on this ship together and it is time to circle the wagons.
- How smart the people in this room are really stands out. Celebrate that this work is valuable to a society and it is important to stand up and fight for it, and not back off. There is a brilliance to the variety of ways we all serve young people.

- Support the advocacy networks. There should be active participation in advocacy networks. Thinking about our collective power and voice in this room, what can we do to be active, engaged participants.
- How can we leverage the work we do right now, and make the case ourselves?
- Greatest strength is how collaborative the Los Angeles Arts community is willing and able to be. It differentiates us. This comes from scarcity of resources and our geography, and it is a theme running through all of the conversation. The sum being greater than the parts enables us to deal with these challenges.
- Things are so tight and tense, and to be here with colleagues makes me feel less depressed.
- “Put your finger where the hurt is.” Concerning school district, the implications of the failure of the schools is a great opportunity for the community to respond and rework.
- Economy and scarcity still concerns and haunts. Being stuck – hard to move to the next level when there is no money to move in that direction. Funding undercuts the conversation.

Needs expressed by Arts Education Organizations

- Assistance with technology – using social media.
- Proof that the arts are healing for the economy – more research
- Help with marketing what the arts can do? Get the word out.
- Moments of inspiration – it is time to take risks. Google’s philosophy is launch early and often. Can we hear from other corporate heads to inspire.
- Would like to have LACAC facilitate the conversation between this group and funders and policymakers. Efforts to help make those connections.

The following announcements were made at end of the session.

- The 2009 LA Arts Town Hall will be held on Friday, June 12, 8:30 – 3:00 p.m. at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center. There will be an arts education breakout session organized by *Arts for All* and the Music Center Arts Education Department. Please RSVP at <http://artsforla.org/2009ArtsTownHall>
- The next roundtable event will be LA County Arts Ed Roundtable: Teaching Artist Learning Community on Tuesday, June 16, 5:00 – 7:30 p.m. at the Los Angeles County Arts Commission. This event will provide teaching artists with the opportunity to workshop lesson plans with master teaching artist. Please RSVP at <http://laartsedroundtable-teachingartistlearningcommunity.eventbrite.com>
- May 21 – conference call. Workforce investment opportunities for organizations to bring in youth and seniors.
- NEA Recovery Money regranting guidelines will be announced June 29th. A statewide coordinated effort will be announced on July 1st. The Local Arts Agency deadline will be July 22, and California Arts Council will be August 1st.
- The next LA Arts Ed Happy hour will be Tuesday, July 14th. Further details will be announced on the Arts Ed Roundtable Listserv.
- To continue the conversation and receive information on future roundtable events please join the Arts Ed Roundtable Listserv by emailing: arts_ed_roundtable-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

The Los Angeles County Arts Commission and the Music Center Education Division would like to thank everyone for participating in this conversation and look forward to continuing this conversation at the 2009 Arts Town Hall on June 12th.