

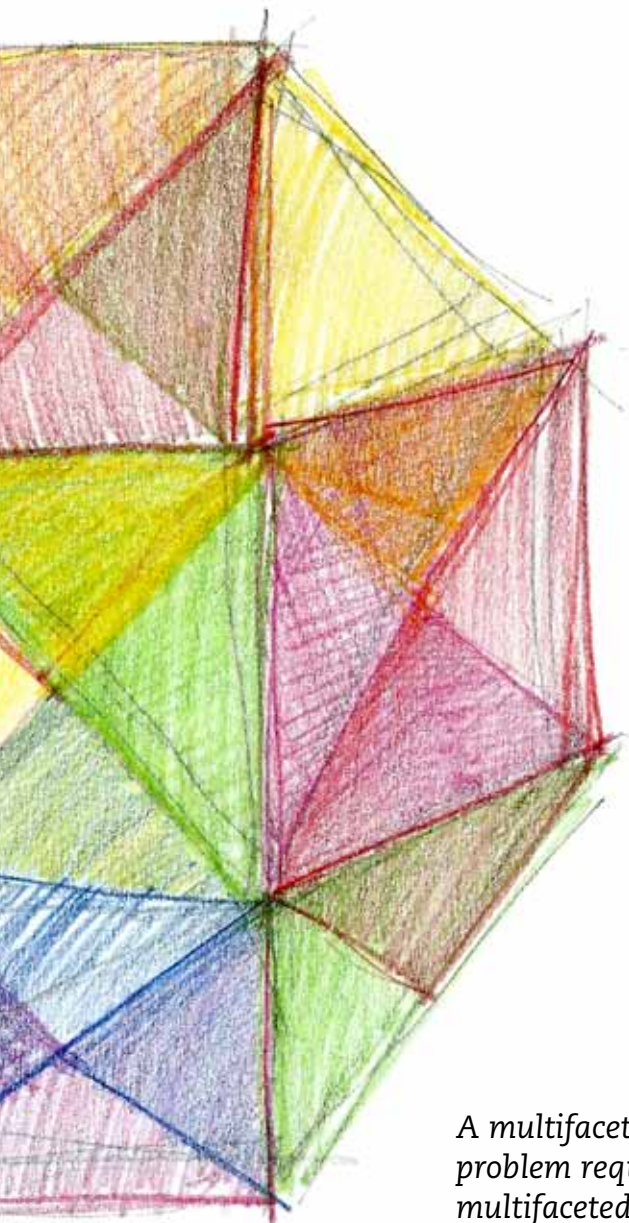


ART WORKS.

National
Endowment
for the Arts

arts.gov

Foundation for a
New Arts Education
Strategy



*A multifaceted
problem requires a
multifaceted solution*

**Education Leaders Institute
Alumni Summit Report**

The question facing the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was:

How can leaders develop systemic support for arts education for all students within pre-K through 12th-grade education?

To help answer this question, the National Endowment for the Arts launched the Education Leaders Institute (ELI). Bringing together executive-level, cross-sector state teams, ELI provided space to explore and debate key questions to advance arts education and provocateurs to challenge current assumptions about arts and education. Over a five-year period, teams from 29 states participated in ELI, with eight of these teams returning to attend an ELI Alumni Summit. The purpose of the Summit was to share progress, challenges, and lessons learned, as well as deepen understanding of the critical elements necessary to advance arts education.

The findings of the final report have shaped the priorities, leadership, and investments in arts education for the NEA. Incorporating what we learned from ELI, the NEA developed a new arts education strategic plan that is included in this report. We believe that when implemented over time, this plan will move us towards our vision for arts education in this country: that every student is engaged and empowered through an excellent arts education.

The full report, which includes the agency's Arts Education Strategic Plan, can be found at [arts.gov](https://www.arts.gov).

Catalysts to Advance Arts Education

Drawing from the experiences in ELI and knowledge gained by participants in the ELI Alumni Summit, the report presents four key catalysts to advance the arts as a core element of education.

Cross-Sector Collaboration Systemic Change

Building Consensus for Sustained Commitment

Aligning Priorities

"It really is amazing what can happen when you bring a group of passionate, intelligent people together around the subject and you come up with solutions that you never could have dreamed of in isolation."

– An ELI Alumni Summit Participant

Cross-Sector Collaboration

ELI required states to submit a team of “unusual suspects” representing each state’s varied constituencies. Critical to the success of ELI state teams was that the team members came from different backgrounds, with different work roles and responsibilities. In general the most successful ELI state teams consisted of some combination of representation from state legislators, governor’s cabinet members, state school board members, superintendents, public safety officials, district-level school leaders, artists, arts advocates, higher education administrators/faculty, philanthropists, and business leaders.

“There’s been this whole catalyst-like energy that came out of ELI. People were working in silos and there wasn’t this state-wide effort until ELI.”

Systemic Change

State team members stated that providing equitable access to high-quality arts education to all students—versus pockets of excellence for some—was their highest priority. Through their participation in ELI, they came to understand that piecemeal approaches dedicated to a specific need might have an isolated impact, valuable to some, for sure. However, ensuring arts education for all students is a “wicked problem”—a problem that is not easily solved because of unclear solutions and a complex web of impediments, some known and some seemingly unknowable—and demands a different way of thinking. While challenging, the ELI state teams came to understand systemic change, defined as “change that permeates all parts of a system,” at a local, state, and national level was essential to building and sustaining support for arts education.

“It took us four years to get certified teachers in the classroom. It took us three years to get the School for the Arts. It’s a lifetime of work. It’s not something that you do immediately and you’re done. People have to realize we’re in it for the long haul. It took a long time for the schools to get in the condition they’re in now and it’s going to take a while to get them back on track.”



Creative Action works with Austin students. Photo courtesy of Creative Action



Building Consensus for Sustained Commitment

Because state team members represented different constituencies and had different work roles in their home states, they often came to ELI with different ideas for supporting arts education. Teams worked through innovative options for addressing their wicked problems at ELI by developing a common set of objectives. When various stakeholders within the states' political, arts, educational, and business systems agreed on common goals for arts education and acted in concert, they had a much greater likelihood of success in implementing their post-ELI plans and achieving their goals for systemic change.

Maintaining the sustained attention of state team members could be a challenge. The most successful state teams had committed members who continued to work together effectively after their ELI experience, with a partner coordinating their efforts.

“We literally stopped our work and said, ‘What are we going to do to actually make this a sustainable construct in [our] state?’ Those continuous conversations had just started. We had to make a commitment that we were going to meet weekly, and we’ve continued to do that ever since.”

Aligning Priorities

ELI state teams struggled with balancing the need for expanding access to arts education with competing state priorities. ELI helped each state to position their arts initiatives within the broader movements of educational reform, economic growth, and innovation. Team members were part of a national, multi-state effort that coordinated top-to-bottom resources across diverse constituencies to position arts education as essential to a complete education.

“A lot of our challenges are due to policy and legislation that is already in place. There’s a huge emphasis on accountability, initiatives like Race to the Top, and new standards. We have to constantly figure out ways to keep [the arts] entwined and moving forward in the context of all these other initiatives.”



Batiste Cultural Arts Academy in New Orleans providing music lessons and introducing students to different instruments. Photo by David Aleman, f-stop Photography



Artist-in-residence Monte Yellow Bird at the Holler Museum of Art in Helena, Montana, works with a local student. Photo courtesy of Emily Yellow Bird

Next Steps for the National Endowment for the Arts: A Strategic Plan for Arts Education

The four catalysts identified for advancing arts education align with the framework of **collective impact** that was introduced at the ELI Alumni Summit. The NEA's Arts Education Strategic Plan, which is grounded in collective impact, is guiding the agency's leadership, investments, and annual priority-setting process for pre-K through 12th-grade arts education. Fulfillment of the strategies in this plan will further deepen the agency's leadership and contributions to arts learning across the country.

The strategic plan consists of a vision, a mission, and four goals.

Vision: Every student is engaged and empowered through an excellent arts education.

Mission: Position arts education as a driver for transforming students, schools, and communities.

Goals:

- Leverage investments for deeper impact
- Drive a national arts education data and research agenda
- Collaborate with national, state and local leaders for collective impact
- Provide leadership for the field of arts education

The agency's Arts Education Strategic Plan, which is included in the full ELI report, can be found at **arts.gov**.

We can benefit from each other's experiences. As a partner in this important work, **you are invited to share collective impact stories about your community, including successes and challenges** at collectiveimpact@arts.gov. We look forward to hearing your stories!

Acknowledgments

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