

Art Advocacy Resources



Craig Roland

One of the first books I purchased as an art teacher early in my career was on art advocacy from the National Art Education Association. While I no longer have the book, its message continues to resonate with me—art teachers have to always be ready to make a strong case for their programs in the public schools. This is true in both prosperous and lean economic times. Fortunately, the Web offers a wealth of resources that can help in advocating for art education in schools today. Here is a sampling:

Americans for the Arts

Americans for the Arts (www.americansforthearts.org/public_awareness) has partnered with the Ad Council to create a multi-year national public service advertising campaign to encourage more arts education opportunities for children. The newest phase of the campaign, called "The Arts, Ask for More," features a number of radio and television ads that are designed to educate parents and citizens on why the arts are essential to a child's development and to persuade them to include more art in children's lives.

The Arts Education Partnership

The Arts Education Partnership (aep-arts.org) is a national alliance of arts, education, business, government, and philanthropic organizations whose mission is to promote the essential role of the arts in the learning and development of every child, and in the improvement of America's schools. Visit their website to find news and research-based publications that examine the effects of arts learning on students' social and academic skills.

The Dana Foundation

The Dana Foundation (www.dana.org/arteducation.aspx) is a private philanthropic institution that supports activities and publications in science, health, and education. The foundation offers support for arts education in schools through conferences, professional development activities, and disseminating the latest news items and publications on arts education, including important studies on arts learning and the brain.

NAEA

The National Art Education Association (www.arteducators.org) is the leading professional organization in

the field, serving more than 20,000 members. Its mission is to promote art education through professional development, service, advancement of knowledge, and leadership. Among the many advocacy resources available on the NAEA site, you'll find Elliott Eisner's "10 Lessons the Arts Teach," "The NAEP Arts Assessment Toolkit," which offers guidance in understanding the Nation's Arts Report Card and communicating to others about it, and links to other resources that will help you be a successful arts activist.

Edutopia and ArtsEdge

Edutopia's February 2009 Special report on arts education (www.edutopia.org/arts-education-art-music-report) features several articles about the latest research supporting the arts in learning and innovative arts education programs in schools across the country. There are also links to related articles and videos on the Edutopia site. Similarly, the Kennedy Center's ArtsEdge website (artsedge.kennedy-center.org) includes a nice collection of articles on their Advocacy Essentials page that offer tips and resources on enlisting others in joining a movement to support arts education.

Lastly, I recommend that you read Sir Ken Robinson's article "How Schools Stifle Creativity" on the CNN Opinion page (tinyurl.com/y8z2v4k), in which he discusses why his popular 2006 Ted Talk on the same topic resonates with people. He makes a strong case that the emphasis in American schools today on narrowly assessing students through standardized testing devalues certain talents and forms of creativity that don't fit neatly in academic contexts. ☺

Craig Roland is an associate professor of art education in the School of Art and Art History at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida. He is the author of The Art Teacher's Guide to the Internet (Davis Publications, 2005). rolandc@ufl.edu