

CREATING COMMON GROUND
Arts Education Practice & Policy

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Changing the Environment
Building a Strong Coalition

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Three Things We've Learned

Advocacy - there is no magic formula. Just do it.

Consistency is the key.

Advocacy is a way of work rather than an item on a "to do" list.
It should be integrated in all arts education activities.

WHO WE ARE

A Consistent Presence

The mission of the Pinellas ACE Coalition is to ensure the role of arts education in Pinellas County Schools

- Goal 1: To serve as an advocate for arts education for all students
- Goal 2: Influence the delivery of arts education
- Goal 3: Monitor decision-making as it affects arts education
- Goal 4: Encourage collaborations among schools, artists, arts agencies and the community
- Goal 5: Maintain an organizational structure and the resources to support the above goals

Arts for a Complete Education / Pinellas is:

- An arts education advocacy group - a watch dog for arts in the basic curriculum
- Are part of ACE/FAAE (Arts for a Complete Education/Florida Alliance for Arts Education) - a statewide initiative
- One of the two oldest and recognized as the most consistent, effective local coalition in the state.
- Partner with the schools in identifying ways to improve the delivery of arts education to students
- A resource to the school system on arts education issues
- Supported by the Pinellas County Arts Council as an out-reach program
- Interested in arts for all students at all levels as part of the basic curriculum

A PITFALL - How Most Coalitions Begin

- Usually in crisis over a program loss
- Parents, students, teachers and community people come together to communicate displeasure to administrators and school board members
- Crisis creates a coalition
- Crisis resolution dissolves a coalition creating a lack of consistency
- No sustained coalition results in the unnoticed erosion of arts programs

WHAT WE DO

A Consistent Message

Step One - form a group or coalition of people to undertake an advocacy campaign. Make a connection between the school system and a community person or cultural organization(s)

- Small or rural community with no cultural agencies or organizations
- Band boosters
- Parents of art and theater students
- Church choir directors
- Art club members
- Community college arts faculty
- Mid-size community with limited number of cultural agencies or organizations
- Little Theater
- Performing arts venue
- Large community with several cultural agencies or organizations
- Local Arts Agency / Arts Council
- Large arts organization(s) education staff

Note: Create a coalition with as much diversity as possible. Involve educators, community members, business leaders, parents, arts vendors, artists in residence - make sure diverse viewpoints are represented.

Step Two - create an advocacy plan

- Create a link with all decision makers, state legislators, county elected officials, school board members, and school administrators.
- Develop a core of proposed activities / strategies with a time line and assigned responsibilities.

Step Three- implement the plan

- Remember, "He who shows up wins."
- Consistency and persistence are rewarded.
- Take action with created links to decision makers
- Meet with decision makers
- Share the local and state arts education agenda
- Implement other activities / strategies according to your time line

Step Four - sustain the coalition, the plan and the implementation long term.

- Meet on a regular basis, not less than once a month

Step Five - remember that the road to Hell is paved with good intentions

Avoid the following pitfalls

1. Large scale arts one time awareness events or celebrations with no measureable goals or follow through
2. Creating after-school arts programs to replace lost in-school arts programs
3. Investing in visiting artists, artists-in-residence programs or in-school performing arts programs as adequate replacements for authentic art education

WHY WE ARE SUCCESSFUL

A Consistent Presence, Message and Programs

- Meetings are regularly scheduled, short, effective and have specific outcomes.
- Has a stable leadership group/organization
- Is proactive
- Has a nimble structure allowing a revised agenda for each school year
- Its members include representatives from all arts education interest groups
- It makes friends with decision-makers, i.e. school board, administrators, legislators
- It engages in give-and-take dialogue with school officials, i.e. it works WITH the schools
- Monitors all decision-making by school officials and legislators
- It knows and understands the schools' agendas/priorities/pressures
- It is clear about its goals in regards to the curriculum
- It makes reasonable suggestions for incremental changes to reach those goals
- Have a presence at all school board meetings
- Make meaningful presentations to school board throughout the year
- Schedule one to three meetings a year with administrators to discuss the state of arts education in your district as well as future plans
- Organize an arts appreciation event (breakfast, lunch, reception) for principals and other local decision makers
- Organize a presentation or event for guidance counselors
- Offer training to non-arts teachers and administrators

NOTE: A coalition is a watch dog which wags its tail more than it bares its teeth.

Concrete Examples of Success

- Despite stagnant enrollment, budget cuts, and a relentless focus on remediation, students' enrollment in arts classes continues to grow. There are significantly more arts programs and arts teachers in Pinellas today than 5 years ago.
- Recently passed a referendum for increased teacher salaries on the backs of arts supporters by promising \$2,300,000 per year in additional funds for music and visual arts
- Despite class size legislation that requires the construction of new classrooms, Pinellas is committed to providing designated art and music rooms at the elementary level.
- Partnership with the local Education Foundation has resulted in the creation of the Walker's Rising Star Scholarship Program - \$100,000.00 per year to accomplished arts students
- Retiring superintendent left as his legacy an arts education scholarship in his name
- Although the district has made difficult and deep budget cuts at least 3 times over the past 9 years, throughout each budget cutting process, arts were never ever considered as one of the areas to cut. For example, in April 2006, the board trimmed \$20,000,000.00 from the budget but did not touch any arts programs.