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STATE POLICY PILOT PROGRAM

A CASE STUDY FROM

Oklahoma



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About Americans for the Arts

The mission of Americans for the Arts is to serve, advance, and lead the network of organizations and individuals who cultivate, promote, sustain, and support the arts in America.

Founded in 1960, Americans for the Arts is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education. From offices in Washington, DC and New York City, we provide a rich array of programs that meet the needs of more than 150,000 members and stakeholders. We are dedicated to representing and serving local communities and to creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts.

About the State Policy Pilot Program

The State Policy Pilot Program (SP3) was a three-year initiative of Americans for the Arts focused on a three-pronged approach of data collection, technical assistance, and knowledge exchange to work toward influencing implementation of federal mandates or programs at the state level; expanding state support of arts education in policy and appropriations; and impacting local access to arts programs and instruction for students. Through annual grants and technical assistance, Americans for the Arts empowered leaders and stakeholders from 10 state teams seeking to strengthen arts education by advancing state policy in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Wyoming.

Visit www.AmericansForTheArts.org/SP3 for more info!

Americans for the Arts would like to thank the following funding partners for their significant support of the State Policy Pilot Program:

**CHARMAINE AND DAN
WARMENHOVEN**



Acknowledgements

The Oklahoma case study is part of a set of materials generated by the Americans for the Arts' State Policy Pilot Program.

Americans for the Arts would like to thank the many individuals who also contributed to this publication, especially:

Jennifer Allen Barron
Arts Education Director at
Oklahoma Arts Council

Amber Sharples
Executive Director at
Oklahoma Arts Council

Julia Kirt
Executive Director at
Oklahomans for the Arts

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Higher Education

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Oklahoma City Public School District

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Northeastern State University

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Tulsa Public Schools

DWe Williams
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Many additional insights were provided by Americans for the Arts staff over the duration of the project including Elisabeth Dorman, Jeff M. Poulin, Kristen Engebretsen, Jay Dick, and Narric W. Rome; RMC Research staff Chris Dwyer and Susan Frankel; as well as researchers and facilitators Jonathan Katz, Dawn M. Ellis, Robert Morrison, Mary Margaret Schoenfeld, Yael Silk, and Barb Whitney; and organizations like the Arts Education Partnership, Education Commission of the States, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

About the State Policy Pilot Program

The State Policy Pilot Program—“**SP3**”—was a **3-YEAR** initiative of Americans for the Arts focused on a **3-PRONGED** approach of data collection, technical assistance, and knowledge exchange to work toward achieving the broad goals of:

- influencing implementation of federal mandates or programs at the state level;
- expanding state support of arts education in policy and appropriations; and
- impacting local access to arts programs and instruction for students.

Through annual grants and technical assistance, Americans for the Arts empowered leaders and stakeholders from 10 state teams seeking to strengthen arts education by advancing state policy in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Wyoming.

The results of this program include numerous reports, case studies, and a network of state leaders ready to enact policy change and advocacy initiatives to advance arts education across the nation.

NATIONAL THEMES

Throughout the 3-year State Policy Pilot Program, several themes were observed across all case studies, which support the trends in policy development and advocacy infrastructure.

1. Employing the Federal-State-Local Policy Pipeline: establishing a pathway to link federal policy frameworks and federal guidance to state-level education policy development to impact local implementation of educational resources.

2. Utilizing Data to Support Policy Development and Advocacy Efforts: research and analysis will both inform and influence the path toward devising an effective policy or advocacy strategy.

3. Embracing the Power of Convening: coming together as diverse stakeholders, whether at the national, state, or local levels is an essential part of relationship building, plan crafting, and policy development.

4. Sharing Knowledge Among State Leaders: documenting and disseminating the good, the bad, and the innovative concepts from your work is key to have ownership and a stake in the shared advancement of the field of arts education.

Policy Development Trends



Sustaining
Appropriations for
Statewide Initiatives



Revising K-12 Arts
Education Standards



Implementing Arts
Provisions in ESSA



Enabling Title I
Policy Pathway

*Look for
these icons
throughout
the SP3
series!*



Building Infrastructure
for Stakeholder
Engagement

Advocacy Infrastructure Trends



Sustaining Core
Leadership



Forming
Relationships
with Coalitions



Fostering
Allies Among
Elected Officials



Building an
Information Base



Crafting
Consistent and
Effective Messages





Creating
Communication
Infrastructure for
Grassroots Advocacy

Read more about the State Policy Pilot Program and its findings at AmericansForTheArts.org/SP3

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the Oklahoma Arts Council (OAC) applied for Oklahoma to be one of Americans for the Arts' cohort of ten states to participate in the State Pilot Policy Program (SP3). Upon news of selection in July 2014, the agency began to take a frank look at the arts education infrastructure and providers in the state. Early in this process, the team recognized a fractured arts education landscape, whose leaders operated without any formal avenue for ongoing communication, despite shared missions. By coalescing this arts education network, the OAC hoped to leverage existing data and the expertise of leaders in the field to identify the most pressing needs for arts education in the state and make the case for its importance. Working with Americans for the Arts, the team prioritized three goals:

- 1 Data collection and analysis: Determining priorities** Gather and analyze existing data on arts education in Oklahoma to guide the ongoing process. 
- 2 Plan and policy development** Engage the state team in creating policy recommendations informed by data collection and analysis.
- 3 Establish and implement processes for arts education policy advocacy** Build a public education campaign and legislative advocacy around arts education issues, and infuse them with broad case-making for arts education at every step of the process. 



Some of the most exciting work of the State Team focused on building the infrastructure and developing shared priorities for action among those in the arts education field.

However, this work has not progressed in a linear fashion. With each step forward, the team faced new unforeseen events, both promising and challenging—statewide revenue failures, new federal education legislation, administrative changes at Oklahoma’s Department of Education (OSDE), to name a few—and thus needed to adapt in a fluid environment.

After 3 years, many positive outcomes became evident. Arts education leaders in Oklahoma have forged new networks, opened lines of communication, developed and practiced new advocacy strategies, and yielded rich research-based data that will add relevance and clarity for work in years to come.

TASK FORCE WORK

Oklahoma's application to Americans for the Arts described a task force made up of a broad cross-section of arts education decision-makers and practitioners, whose work would help define priorities for the state team. Before assembling the State Team, team members Amber Sharples (executive director, OAC) and Julia Kirt (executive director, Oklahomans for the Arts or OFTA) met with Jennifer Allen-Barron (arts education director, OAC) to discuss the structure of this Task Force and ensure that the initiative would firmly ground any eventual policy recommendations in the state's unique context. Long-term goals for the Task Force would be creating a vital arts education network that maintained regular communication to support arts education initiatives in the future.





Discussions of Task Force membership included topics such as:

- Optimal number of Task Force members for best group dynamics.
- Duties and responsibilities expected of members.
- Geographical diversity of members.
- Organizational/Institutional diversity of members.
- Cultural/ethnic diversity of members.
- Representation of four primary artistic disciplines (dance, drama, music, and visual arts)



The duties expected of each Task Force member, as delineated in members' initial invitation letter, include:

- Meet no more than three times per year for the duration of the project.
- Lend expertise and experience to discussions.
- Develop a list of specific priorities for OK public schools in arts education.
- Assist with advocacy efforts for any issues the Task Force selects to go forward.

As possibilities for the Task Force members began to coalesce, the team leadership became aware that many of the individuals and organizations had lengthy, shared histories that might include past collaborations, partnerships, or even conflicts of personalities. Some members would come to the table with decades of experience, while others were new to the field or to the state, and these dynamics might color their contributions. To guide the group's work, maintain focus, and sidestep any potential issues, the task force hired a facilitator from outside Oklahoma: Mary Margaret Schoenfeld, national coordinator for U.S. Regional Arts Organizations and independent arts and cultural professional. Schoenfeld's facilitation was invaluable to this process. Including such a skilled facilitator was a fruitful and successful strategy for progress.

FINAL LIST OF TASK FORCE MEMBERS

NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION
Anita Arnold	Executive Director	Black Liberated Arts Center, Inc.
Julie Baird	Executive Director	Leonardo's Art Center (nonprofit)
Lemuel Bardeguez	Director Of Cultural Programs	Oklahoma City Community College
Brad Benson	Fine Arts Director	Norman Public Schools
Tyler Bridges	Assistant Superintendent	Clinton Public School District
Isolete De Almeida	Chair	Oklahoma Art Education Association
Nancy Fields	Education Coordinator	American Indian Cultural Center and Museum
Miranda Gilbert	Liaison, Department Of Tourism	City of Guymon
Shan Glandon	Chair	Oklahoma Alliance for Arts Education
Gracie Branch	Associate Executive Director	Cooperative Council of Oklahoma School Administrators
Liz Guerrero-Lee	Director, Community Outreach	Metro Technology Centers (Career Tech Center)
Glen Henry	Fine Arts Director	OSDE
E. K. Jeong	Assistant Professor	Southwestern Oklahoma State University
Sandra Kent	Executive Director	Oklahoma A+ Schools
Tonya Kilburn	Director	Prairie Dance Theatre
Susan McCalmont	Chair	Creative Oklahoma
Henry Moy	Quintus H. Herron Director	Museum of the Red River
Dwight Pickering	Director Of American Indian Education	OSDE
Debra Stuart	Director, Educational Partnerships	Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education
Amber Tait	Any Given Child Director	Tulsa Arts and Humanities Council
Rhonda Taylor	Fine Arts Director	Oklahoma City Public Schools
Anita Thompson	Director, Sequoyah Institute	Northeastern State University
Ann Tomlins	Fine Arts Director	Tulsa Public Schools
DWe Williams	Teaching Artist, Drama And Storytelling	OAC Teaching Artist Roster

The Task Force met four times over two years. Meetings progressed toward identifying arts education priorities and the commission of related research:

JULY 15, 2015

PLANNED OUTCOME

- Greet and orient Task Force members.
- Identify existing data sets related to arts education in Oklahoma, and charge Task Force members to aid in collecting this data.

PROGRESS TOWARD OUTCOME

- Orientation of members was a success, with one member mentioning it was the first time these arts education leaders had all been in the same place.
- Group was actively engaged in brainstorming work

TAKEAWAYS

- So much data exists, and in so many wildly divergent forms, that data collection can be endless work without narrowing the scope.
- What data is most important for this group?
- What story does the Task Force want to tell?
- State team/OAC held conversations with Mary Margaret Schoenfeld, contracted Task Force facilitator, afterwards to discuss limitations of existing data and re-focus the task force's goals for future meetings.

OCTOBER 21, 2015

PLANNED OUTCOME

Facilitate a Task Force brainstorming around the guiding questions:

- What does it look like when arts education is working well? How can we tell? (At the student level, for teachers, in the classroom, school, community, district, and state)

PROGRESS TOWARD OUTCOME

- The Task Force defined 10 preliminary areas of focus, with broad comments for each.
- Task Force members were fully engaged in brainstorm process.

TAKEAWAYS

- This was the shortest meeting of the four.
 - "Advocacy" goal potentially tricky due to OAC (state agency) role/legally unable to participate in many efforts of this type
 - Many links exist between different areas. How do we carry over these ideas?
-

JANUARY 15, 2016 PLANNED OUTCOME

- Kate McClanahan from Americans for the Arts presented information on the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) and its implications for arts education.
- Using priority categories the Task Force identified at a prior meeting, members honed previous discussions into three defined priorities.

PROGRESS TOWARD OUTCOME

The Task Force identified three main priorities for providing excellent arts education:

1. Qualified, supported instructors providing high-quality content.
2. Access and equity: All of the arts for all OK students, regardless of age, geography, race, disability, income, or other barriers.
3. Framing the message that the arts are essential.

TAKEAWAYS

These priorities will help shape the work of the contracted researchers:

- **Nourish Your Path:** using access and quality instruction as metrics for site selection, adding assessment, professional development, and messaging to survey questions.
- **Resources for Learning:** using messaging as a framework for identifying research

DECEMBER 1, 2016 PLANNED OUTCOME

Researchers submitted drafts of research products to the task force for review and response.

PROGRESS TOWARD OUTCOME

State Team worked with Task Force to gather feedback and input for research consultants.

TAKEAWAYS

Researchers from Resources for Learning publicly presented research February 28, 2017, to an audience of more than 100 arts, education, and arts education decision-makers from across the state.

RESEARCH COMMISSIONED

Moving away from analyzing existing data sets and toward commissioning new research was a significant shift in the task force's work, determined necessary at its first two meetings. Existing data on arts education in Oklahoma public schools were scarce, dated, and too specific to use broadly. Commissioning new research could help ensure that working with data was timely, state specific, and responsive to the priorities that the Task Force had identified.



Between the first and second meeting of the Task Force, OAC staff spoke by phone with leading arts education consultants to discuss what types of data collection might be feasible and most relevant. After several discussions, the SP3 Team finalized the format of the research products: The combination of a set of case studies and a literature review, by separate consultant researchers in communication with one another, would be most useful for directing future task force efforts.



Case Studies

Following the Oklahoma legislature's May 2014 repeal of Common Core Standards in mathematics and English language arts, the agency determined that the emphasis Oklahoma placed on local control would be essential in any research or eventual recommendations. Creating case studies would allow researchers to examine specific schools in the state that are delivering high-quality arts education. Relying on the task force's work for a definition of "high-quality arts education," these case studies could then provide a replicable road map for schools across the state.

At the second Task Force meeting, members began the process of identifying a set of crucial characteristics for high-quality arts education, which at the third meeting further they defined and divided into categories of quality instruction and quality content:

QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION

- Credentials: excellent training available; robust degree requirements
 - Strong arts content skills
 - Strong education skills (classroom management, curriculum development)
 - Ongoing professional development is available, accessible, of high quality
- Strong communication and support between teachers and administrators
- Access to available community assets, including arts spaces, working artists, artists-in-residence

QUALITY OF CONTENT

- Standalone arts classes are available, and parity exists among artistic disciplines
- Arts integration—including STEM to STEAM approaches—are available, and any arts integration strategy demonstrates fidelity to quality in both subjects.
- Assessment/accountability is insightful and of high quality (tied to arts learning goals, reliant on both summative and formative methods, qualitative and quantitative measures, and is understood as not synonymous with standardized testing).
- Access to available community assets, including arts spaces, working artists, artists-in-residence

The Task Force commissioned the consulting group Nourish Your Path, LLC, to complete these case studies, as a strategy for addressing the Task Force's first two priorities for arts education:

1. Quality instruction and content and;
2. Access and equity: Arts for all Oklahoma students.

In its definition of access and equity, the Task Force identified several potential axes of inequity that may affect students' ability to experience the arts in schools:

AGE

- Are arts classes equally available to students in elementary, middle, or high schools?
- Do students in early childhood learning centers have access to arts learning?

INCOME

- Do arts offerings lag in lower-income schools or districts?
- Do lower-income schools have fewer teachers/less time/more crowded classrooms?

GEOGRAPHY

- Are artists or arts instructors willing to travel to remote rural communities?
- What circumstances or cultures are different in urban vs. rural schools?
- Do students in rural areas face dual barriers of lower-income communities and geographic isolation?
- Do local control issues play a factor in arts education delivery?

ETHNIC DIVERSITY/INCLUSION

- Do students in ethnic minority communities have equal access to arts learning?
- Are arts educators presenting culturally specific learning opportunities?
- Is there diversity among arts educators as well as among students?

DISABILITY

- Are accommodations made available for students with disabilities to access arts learning?



To identify schools that address the priority issue of high-quality instruction and content, per task force definitions, Nourish Your Path worked with OAC arts education director Jennifer Allen-Barron—and several individual Task Force members who represented statewide networks and larger school districts across the state—to identify a master list of more than 25 OK schools that present high-quality arts education to their students.

To address the priority issue of equity and access, researchers from Nourish Your Path and Resources for Learning analyzed this master list according to publicly available demographic information on Title I eligibility, ethnic demography, and percentage of students enrolled in special education or utilizing Individualized Educational Plans. The researchers further delineated the list by geographical representation of the state's different urban and rural regions and by type of school (elementary, middle, K-8, and high schools) to ensure that the final five schools represented broad circumstances within the state.



Nourish Your Path’s principal researcher contacted principals, district administrators, and classroom arts instructors at each of the five schools to conduct interviews. When necessary, Allen-Barron submitted applications to district internal review boards in order to secure district permission. Research took place during the fall 2016 semester, and Nourish Your Path submitted a draft for Task Force review on November 15, 2016.

Toward the end of the case studies, researchers drafted a [set of implications](#) that helpfully encapsulates several of the studies’ recurring themes, which have provided useful frameworks for continuing work that this research informs.



IMPLICATIONS

Presented are implication of the findings, including questions for reflection. This list is not exhaustive. Rather, it represents some of the implications, which emerged across the schools.

- 1 All of the schools have minimal fine arts requirements.** Based on the interview data, what are possible advantages and disadvantages to increasing the number of required fine arts courses? Similarly, when schools lack electives, students must take fine arts courses. How do fine arts choices vs. requirements affect student engagement, funding allocation, professional development, scheduling, and more?
- 2 The availability of fine arts standards and the implementation of existing curricula related to standards varies across schools.** What are the expectations regarding developing an arts curriculum? Without an established set of standards in all disciplines, what strategies and resources do teachers have for designing and implementing curriculum across the state?
- 3 Similar to curriculum, professional development participation and opportunities vary across the state.** What role does the school and district (if any) play in providing and/or locating content-specific professional development opportunities?

- 4 Staffing issues challenge schools (e.g., recruiting and retaining staff and administrators).** How can schools effectively recruit and retain teachers and administrators? Without certified fine arts teachers, how can schools capitalize on community resources?
- 5 Community members are involved in fine arts programs in a variety of ways.** In some schools, community members are involved differently, depending upon the program (e.g. art vs. music). What goals do schools have regarding community member involvement? What are the differences between outreach to the community vs. community member support in the classrooms and/or for the school? How can schools increase, maximize, and sustain community member involvement?
- 6 Integrating the arts in other content areas appears to depend upon teacher training and collaboration with other teachers.** Although content-area teachers receive collaborative planning time, this does not typically include fine arts teachers, who often have distinct planning time. If arts integration is an important goal, how can schools adjust teacher schedules and professional development differently?
- 7 Funding constraints are present in all of the schools, which has affected staffing, courses offered, supplies, transportation, and opportunities.** At one of the schools, an art teacher offers an innovative idea for overcoming funding challenges: engaging students in a t-shirt screen printing business for the school. How can other schools overcome funding limitations with innovative ideas?
- 8 Multiple equity issues related to fine arts emerged in the interviews,** including reduced planning time for fine arts teachers, the lack of transportation for fine arts students vs. athletes, the lack of recognition by the state for fine arts students, and the lack of content-specific professional development. How can schools, districts, and the state address these issues?
- 9 In some of the interviews, administrators and fine arts teachers provided different perspectives on important issues (e.g. curriculum, staffing, community involvement).** Further, some administrators are unsure about questions related to the fine arts (e.g., curriculum, instruction, and assessment). What are the consequences of a lack of shared understanding? What strategies can facilitate communications between fine arts teachers and administrators?

Literature Review

Resources for Learning, LLC (RFL), designed the literature review to address the task force’s third priority issue for arts education: framing the message that the arts are essential.

The task force’s goal in commissioning this research product was to gather and analyze existing research related to arts education and its benefits for students, and aggregate these studies to craft a compelling case for the importance of arts education within the OSDE’s framework of “College and Career Readiness.” RFL crafted two guiding research questions and tailored research methodology for each:

To inform the work of this Task Force, OAC engaged Resources for Learning (RFL) to examine available research evidence related to the impact of arts on student outcomes. RFL conducted a search of the past 30 years of published research to answer two primary research questions:



- 1 What is the impact of fine arts on student performance on measures of college and career readiness?
- 2 To what extent is participation in fine arts associated with higher outcomes on measures of college and career readiness?

The first research question seeks to learn about whether participating in the arts results in better outcomes, while the second seeks to explore—but not assign causality to—the relationship between the arts and outcomes.

To address Question 1, RFL undertook a best evidence synthesis of 21 existing studies that met their highest criteria for quality. For Question 2, RFL examined an additional 12 correlational studies.

The OAC later developed a trifold brochure summarizing the literature review’s most compelling findings at the suggestion of the task force, as a useful tool for quick conversations with legislators and other decision-makers.



Public Presentation

On February 28, 2017, RFL joined the SP3 State Team and the Task Force to present the commissioned research. More than 100 Oklahomans from all parts of the state traveled to participate in the large group presentation and in small group discussions. Public reception to these research products was positive, with fruitful conversations resulting.

Breakout discussions used the case study “implications” as a starting point, and several takeaways have begun to inform future work. For example, the OAC is currently working with a small group of task force members to develop a plan to address Oklahoma’s lack of academic standards in dance, drama, and early childhood arts. Also, OAC is working with Mary Margaret Schoenfeld and a targeted group to plan and implement statewide professional development opportunities for arts educators.



ADVOCACY WORK

Prior to this project, there has been no formal arts education advocacy conversation in Oklahoma since 2008, when the Kirkpatrick Foundation convened a limited number of statewide arts education meetings. Before that, there was a large awareness campaign for arts education in 2000 led by the now-defunct Oklahoma Business Circle for Arts Education. Discipline-specific arts education networks continue to hold awareness days at the Oklahoma Capitol. The OK Alliance for Arts Education has transitioned from a Kennedy Center affiliate to focusing on professional development and recognition of arts educators and students. Otherwise, organized advocacy has been minimal and fragmented.

In June 2014, OFTA hired Julia Kirt as its first half-time executive director. Kirt has been involved as a SP3 state team member from the outset. OAC received news of Oklahoma's selection as a SP3 state. Kirt's work as a team member has centered on our third initial goal: establishing and implementing processes for arts education policy advocacy.



Primary advocacy efforts addressed three distinct but overlapping audiences, as the SP3 Outcomes Chart defines:

- 1 Engage legislators and elected officials in all steps of the process.
- 2 Engage education leaders, including OSDE/Oklahoma State Board of Education (SBOE), District Superintendents and other district and state education leadership
- 3 Bring the message to: school principals, educators, parents, students, and the general public.

Efforts to communicate with legislators and elected officials were robust and diverse.



In 2014, OFTA issued the first candidate survey on arts and culture to offer voters information about candidates' arts policies, including support of arts education. This survey launched an ongoing process of data collection about legislators' positions on arts education and involvement in the arts. OFTA is now able to gather and share survey results biannually with a large list of stakeholders.

Additionally, the implementation of the online advocacy platform VoterVoice has been a great success for ongoing arts education advocacy work. OFTA launched VoterVoice in early 2015 as a strategy to support direct legislative advocacy. This grassroots initiative has grown quickly, leading to a current list of 5,800 advocates, which OFTA can easily contact with calls for action and other news. Through VoterVoice, OFTA has initiated consistent communications, sending an average of one newsletter per month to the full list and one targeted newsletter per month to organizations or members.



Toward the second intended audience—statewide education leaders and administrators—the development of Oklahoma’s state plan to implement ESSA has driven the advocacy work.

In fall 2016, OFTA published a fact sheet about ESSA and ways to advocate within the OSDE’s community input process. Oklahoma Arts Conference distributed the fact sheet, during sessions related to arts education content, online via social media, and through email. Arts education advocates participated in most of the six ESSA town hall meetings, and the OSDE’s wrap up report of those meetings mentioned arts education.



Next, OFTA worked with arts education leaders to create a letter asking for arts education in the ESSA plan. Twelve statewide arts organizations with related missions signed the letter: Oklahoma A+ Schools, Oklahoma Alliance for Arts Education, Oklahoma Arts Administrator Consortium, Oklahoma Art Education Association, Oklahoma Arts Institute, Oklahoma Association of Music Schools, Oklahoma Community Theatre Association, Oklahoma Museums Association, Oklahoma Music Educators Association, Oklahoma Presenters Network, and Oklahoma Visual Arts Coalition. After OFTA presented the letter to Phil Bacharach, a top-level policy advisor, the OSDE reached out for an in-depth meeting. The OFTA director and OAC director met with State Superintendent of Public Instruction Joy Hofmeister, Deputy Superintendent Robyn Miller, and several policy directors at the OSDE to discuss arts education, ESSA, and other ways to ensure all students have access to arts education in the state.





Bringing messages and calls to action to the Oklahoma public—the third intended audience for arts education advocacy in the team’s SP3 plan—has been another crucial component of this work, and collaboration has been a key strategy.



OFTA has developed mechanisms to provide arts education advocacy information at annual joint session meetings of the Oklahoma City Arts Commission, Tulsa Arts Commission and Norman Public Arts Board. These commissions receive regular legislative updates from OFTA, and a network of advocates continue to work with them on local and statewide advocacy. Systematic meetings and regular reporting have been critical to these efforts.

Public call-to-action campaigns have also stemmed from VoterVoice and other methods described above.

STATE TEAM WORK

The OAC's proposal defined the state team to include OAC Executive Director Amber Sharples, OFTA Executive Director Julia Kirt, and several elected officials, including the state's superintendent of public instruction, an Oklahoma state representative, an Oklahoma state senator, and Lieutenant Governor Todd Lamb.

Although Superintendent Hofmeister, Representative Katie Henke, and Senator Jason Smalley quickly accepted the agency's invitations, it did not receive a response from Lt. Gov. Lamb. Sharples felt that Lamb's involvement would be key to obtaining broad legislative support for any recommendations that resulted from the SP3 work, and she was reluctant to proceed in convening the group without representation from the lieutenant governor's office.

Unfortunately, over the two years after the agency sent the initial invitations, this ambitious group never met. Leadership changes at the Oklahoma State Capitol as well as successive revenue failures caused substantial budget reductions to the OSDE several times during the past three years.



Oklahoma's state team consisted of two members: Kirt and Sharples. OAC Arts Education Director Jennifer Allen-Barron acted as the project manager, agency expert, and contact for the SP3 initiative, aiding in communication between OAC, OFTA, AFTA, task force members, and consultants. Although this result was different than the original plan, this small state team continues to work closely and provides a model of nimble collaboration and open communication between the two agencies.

In reviewing the SP3 history, it appears that a quicker decision to consider other potential members for the state team might have yielded a different result, allowing the team to move ahead with those who had agreed to participate. However, the team saw the lieutenant governor's participation as key to administration support of any policy recommendations.

UNFORESEEN VARIABLES

The past three years have been extraordinarily consequential for education—including arts education—in Oklahoma and across the nation. In the months directly following Oklahoma’s selection as an SP3 state, statewide elections installed a new superintendent of public instruction and established new leadership in committees related to education. Prior to this election, then candidate Joy Hofmeister signaled her support for arts education by attending an Arts Education Summit the OAC held in October 2014, where the agency officially announced the SP3 initiative to the field. Superintendent Hofmeister’s election, legislative leadership transition, and selection of leadership for the appropriation subcommittee on education marked opportunities by the OAC and statewide arts education leaders to move arts education policy forward.



December 2015 saw the passage of ESSA, the newest iteration of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) first passed in 1965. Arts education advocates statewide and nationally heralded the move away from overreliance on testing as the primary metric of student achievement, and language shifts that traded mention of “core subjects” with a more holistic discussion of what might constitute a “well-rounded education.”





Because these new federal guidelines brought significant opportunities for change in education, the SP3 team added a new emphasis: informing the ESSA state plan. In addition to sharing information with advocates about ways to participate in community engagement regarding the state plan, state team member and OFTA Director Julia Kirt drafted a letter to Superintendent Joy Hofmeister, encouraging her inclusion of arts education in Oklahoma’s still-developing ESSA state plan. Representatives of eight statewide arts education organizations signed this letter. The superintendent’s office reached out in response, and on March 3, 2017, Superintendent Hofmeister, Deputy Superintendent Robyn Miller, and OSDE Policy Director Phil Bacharach met with Kirt and Sharples. A document prepared by Allen-Barron informed their discussion, drawing on recommendations from the literature review, writings from Americans for the Arts, a review of language from some other states’ ESSA plans, and additional research on strategies for arts education under ESSA. The meeting was positive, and Superintendent Hofmeister and Deputy Superintendent Miller both expressed support for arts education in Oklahoma schools. As of June 2, 2017, Oklahoma released the second draft of its ESSA plan to the public, with several mentions of the arts added throughout. This draft also credits public



participation in town halls and other avenues as key to identifying fine arts as a priority for parents, teachers, and students in the state. OSDE officials also suggested future partnership for offering metrics to analyze the quality of arts education by local school districts and collaboration with new Individualized Career Academic Plans.

Also in December 2015, more challenging developments took place as the State of Oklahoma announced an impending “revenue failure” that would cause reductions to current fiscal year budgets for state agencies. (Oklahoma’s fiscal year follows a July 1–June 30 calendar.) The OSDE received a mid-year reduction of 3 percent (\$46.7 million) in January 2016, and a second mid-year reduction of 4 percent (\$53.6 million) in March 2016. These reductions meant the elimination of several teacher training programs and some student services, and the pursuant FY17 budget eliminated the line item for all “instructional materials” (new textbooks and classroom supplies) for the coming year. Against this backdrop, OAC and the SP3 state team questioned if the timing and context were right for policy recommendations that would expand arts education in schools.



Following the national presidential election in November 2016, Congress confirmed a new Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, whose policies and priorities for education at the federal level have yet to materialize. While many arts education advocates were heartened by a letter from February 10, 2017, in support of the ESSA, many also remain cautious until more policy directions become evident.

Many unknowns still exist related to these events. Certainly, this is also a moment of considerable potential in the field. Thanks to the work of the SP3 task force, OAC staff and state team were well-poised to address some of these issues when they appeared.

OUTCOMES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Many of the implications of the research continue to inform agency work at the OAC. As the agency undergoes a full restructure of the grants program, it has already planned to implement feedback from SP3 research into plans, to remain relevant to schools. With support of arts education in schools as one of the agency priorities of the OAC, the work accomplished through SP3 provides a clearer picture of areas on which the agency should focus its efforts, to have a statewide impact and bring arts to students in classrooms across Oklahoma.

The agency is revisiting several items that sparked discussion at task force meetings for further action by OAC staff and select task force members, as appropriate. A plan for developing state standards for dance, drama, and for arts in early childhood education is underway. A small steering committee with representatives of the OSDE, OAC, and district curriculum specialists has already begun to meet and implement a plan for creating the state standards mentioned above. Enhanced professional development for instructors—a clear need illuminated by commissioned research—is also an area of current focus and planning among OAC staff. Safeguarding and sustaining newly built networks will be key to ensuring success of these and other efforts as needs arise.

The primary takeaways from Oklahoma’s participation in the SP3 program are:

- the creation of arts education networks that will support concrete action in the face of Oklahoma’s shifting educational landscape;
- the commission of research that helps to identify needs, weaknesses, strengths and potential areas of focus related to arts education; and,
- the mobilization of advocacy networks and a unified voice in support of arts education for all students.



Another key positive takeaway from SP3 in Oklahoma is the recognition that the OAC is a leader and catalyst in the field of arts education and the development of a broad network of arts advocates who are now well-versed in issues of arts education and prepared to communicate its benefits to their leaders.

Although the state is facing a moment where budget realities make arts education expansion more difficult, the networks that the team has built will help keep a finger on the pulse of issues relevant to arts education, and the research commissioned provides direction for future efforts and strong casemaking language to bolster this work. For states facing similar budget difficulties and political shifts, the creation and maintenance of a trusted network of arts education professionals is crucial to ensuring that this work remains relevant and rooted in the realities of the field, even while working toward lofty or ambitious goals.

While the state may be in a moment of change, the networks the Team has built and the research-based justifications it has developed will allow for continued forward movement toward tangible goals.

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