

Media Paints Arts Education in Fading Light



Education Commission
of the **States**

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An analysis of national press coverage can help to determine how the subject of arts education is being reported and presented to the public. The types of stories that predominate and shape media coverage on the issues will influence readers, listeners and viewers. In understanding the types of news items that are circulating throughout the general public via mass consumer media, we can better gauge how to reach potential advocates, as well as policymakers, with messages about the immeasurable value of quality arts education. The following is a media analysis, based on a five-month sample of media coverage commissioned by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) with the support of the Ford Foundation.

The Present Climate of Arts Education

The overall image presented of arts education in public schools is that arts are losing ground against more urgent educational priorities. News stories portray arts education as easily traded off in an era of cash-strapped school districts and an increasing focus on standardized testing. By placing the majority of stories in the local and community sections of its publications, the media creates the impression that the decline of the arts in public education is not an issue of national importance. While the arts are not portrayed by the media in a negative light, the media does reinforce a sense of the inevitability of their disappearance. The arts are portrayed as low on the priority list in an educational environment fraught with competing interests.

Emerging from this analysis is a media frame that sets up an “either/or” scenario in which arts education is pitted against core education priorities during budget shortfalls. Arts education also is portrayed in opposition to an increased focus on standardized tests. There is the perception among arts education advocates that an increased focus on testing of core subjects such as math and reading have narrowed public school curricula. The end result seems to be the media’s impression that when forced to choose between testing or the maintenance of the arts in the classrooms, the arts must go. While “richer” school districts can afford to maintain their arts program and “poorer” schools go without, the inequality of students’ educational experiences are largely glossed over by the media. Instead, media coverage highlights the role that foundations, businesses, and community organizations are playing in supplementing arts learning experiences in economically disadvantaged public schools.

THIS MEDIA ANALYSIS COVERS:

- The nature and extent of media coverage on the subject of the arts and/or arts education from a public school and community perspective
- How the issue of arts education is being framed
- The spokespeople who are identified and quoted in news stories
- The outlets that are covering arts and education
- Points of comparison and reference regarding previous work undertaken on arts education by Douglas Gould and Co., namely focus group reports and a national public opinion survey data
- Strategic recommendations for arts education advocates and policymakers.

Detailed Topic Analysis of Arts Education Stories

The following list is a numerical breakdown of all stories in the sample by category. We saw overlap on the topics “budget concerns” and “standardized tests vs. arts in education.” Both issues were discussed in some stories. A full description and detailed analysis of categories follows this list.

TABLE 1: TOPICAL BREAKDOWN

Topic	Number of Stories	Percentage of Total*
Budget Concerns	17	24%
Standardized Tests vs. Arts in Education	16	22%
Arts as Economic Vitality/Cultural Community	7	10%
Establishment of Arts Based Programs	9	13%
Filling the Arts Gap in Public Schools	6	8%
Integrated Arts	5	7%
Intrinsic Value/Well-Rounded Education	5	7%
Miscellaneous	5	7%
Decline of Arts/Endangered Species	2	3%
Totals	72	101%

*Percentage total may not equal 100% due to rounding.

BUDGET CONCERNS (24%)

Budget concerns in school districts topped our list of news stories at 24%. In these stories, overall district funding was decreased and resources to maintain arts teachers and programs were either reduced or eliminated. According to stories in this analysis, budget cuts are occurring not only at the local level, but at the federal and state levels as well. One story in particular dealt with Congress’ inability to fulfill President Bush’s \$18 million request for a nationally recognized arts organization.

Alan Bersin, appointed San Diego superintendent in 1998, clashed with the local teachers union and eventually lost the confidence of his school board. Among the initiatives that proved controversial was his Blueprint for Student Success, a plan that emphasized literacy and math skills. Critics complained that it slighted arts, music and other enrichment courses. Supporters said his changes helped raise district test scores.

– Duke Helfand & Peter Nicholas, Reporters, Los Angeles Times, April 29, 2005

Instead, Congress reduced the allocation to \$2 million.¹ At the state level, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed a new leader of the California State Arts Council, which has virtually no operating budget to create new programs or to diversify existing ones.² The proposed budget for the Washington, D.C. public schools is projected to leave the city’s children further behind their suburban counterparts than ever before, after reducing the availability of art and music classes.³ Budget cuts were quantified in a *Washington Post* story, which revealed that in the 2002–2003 school year, officials estimated that more than 15,000 elementary school students attended schools without an art teacher.⁴ All stories having to do with budget shortfalls in this analysis discussed consequences for arts classes, programs and teachers.

STANDARDIZED TESTS VS. ARTS EDUCATION (22%)

The second major category of media coverage is standardized tests vs. arts in education, which comprised almost a quarter of the total sample. An underlying theme in the majority of stories is that standardized testing and arts education are diametrically opposed to one another. The media reinforces an adversarial relationship in which arts education only gets in the way of teaching the “real” subjects that students need to master in order to succeed. This oppositional relationship appeared most frequently in the opinion sections of newspapers in several parts of the country. In Texas, there has been an increased focus on standardized testing in public schools and this is often discussed in terms of sacrificing the arts. One op-ed, however, made the case that arts education needed to be preserved and that test scores would rise with

students' exposure to the arts.⁵ In another essay, a member of the community questioned whether rote learning was the only thing that students need to succeed at the high school level.⁶ The standardized tests vs. arts education frame was also found in straight news reporting. In a *Los Angeles Times* article, the teachers union criticized Governor Schwarzenegger's appointment of a new education secretary whose reputation for focusing on standardized testing caused concern that arts education could be threatened.⁷ A *Dallas Morning News* story noted that concern emerged over teachers who are given significant monetary incentives based on students' performance on standardized tests. The piece raised an important question: Would teachers integrate an arts curriculum in their classes since it would not be tested?⁸ The *Los Angeles Times* reported that all students would be required to take courses needed for admission to state universities and that such a requirement would cut into the time available for arts and music.⁹

ESTABLISHMENT OF ARTS BASED PROGRAMS (13%)

There were nine stories, or 13% of the total sample, that focused on the establishment of a new creative arts program. These stories usually lead with the dollar amount that was invested in the program. The stories were often tied to large investments made by highly visible institutions, such as performing arts centers, that were targeting students as their core audience. The majority of these stories focused on the institutions themselves and did not go into detail on the arts programs. One account in the *Los Angeles Times* regarding the creation of a public arts academy in Santa Ana identified the decrease in the school's monthly lease payment as an important reason for public support.¹⁰ A report in the *San Francisco Chronicle* gave an account of funding for an arts education program in the North Bay.¹¹ A story in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* told of an arts group that would divide \$2 million to launch five neighborhood projects that would take the arts directly into the community.¹² Other stories about programming looked at partnerships that were being created in the community to secure the arts for students, and these stories examined the success of

“The goals of education should include the development of responsibility; the fostering of self-confidence and self reliance; the encouragement of creativity, enthusiasm and curiosity; and the nurturing of a joy of learning. The primary purpose of education is to produce lifelong independent learners who are able to think critically. For the most part, grades are a hindrance to the achievement of these goals. Grades, and most standardized tests, mostly encourage rote learning that is not what students really need to succeed at college or in the workplace.”

– Math Teacher (op-ed) *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 17, 2005

such programs. The analysis found reports of successful programs in the *Dallas Morning News*, including a school district in Garland, Texas that received national recognition for its music education program¹³ as well as a public/private partnership in Dallas that was working collaboratively to provide arts and culture in public schools.¹⁴

ARTS AS ECONOMIC VITALITY/CULTURAL COMMUNITY (10%)

Ten percent of news stories discussed arts education as important to economic growth and building a strong community. The majority of them were opinion pieces from a wide range of community voices, including government officials, business leaders, community

activists, and intellectuals. These pieces argued that investing in arts education programs could significantly enhance local economic sustainability, sales tax revenues, job creation, etc. and would build a sense of community in public schools that would benefit everyone. One headline in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* read “Beef Up Arts Funding and Everybody Wins.”¹⁵ This opinion piece, written by a bank executive, argued that the arts have the potential to deliver a windfall in a

variety of important sectors that are vital to any community.

Another city in Orange County, California decided to create a new identity and sell itself to the public by emphasizing its support for the arts, going so far as to paint its message on a highly visible water tower.¹⁶ A feature piece in *Salon.com* from an acclaimed author/intellectual argues that American cities realize their potential by incorporating creativity into the identity of the city, and that failing to do so interrupts progress and ingenuity.¹⁷

FILLING THE ARTS GAP IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS (8%)

Several stories, some 8% of our sample, focused on how various entities, from non-profit organizations to

corporations, were investing money in programs and providing other resources to fill in the arts gap left in public schools. Stories in this category revealed how the community at-large was responding to arts cuts in public schools. One account is of a former advertising executive in Texas who is marketing the value of music statewide while music programs are under attack throughout the state.¹⁸ A consistent message throughout this piece was that different communities throughout the state were feeling the burden of reduced funding for music and were looking for alternatives. An interview with a classical musician on National Public Radio explored the role of orchestras around the country in moving beyond performance and creating arts education programs in response to their disappearance from public schools.¹⁹ In its profile of a non-profit organization that provided music education programs to young students, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that the state of California was ranked last for access to arts in education.²⁰ Lastly, the *Detroit Free Press* carried an account of a CEO from Daimler-Chrysler who was supporting funding for an effort to teach the national anthem in public schools in response to music cuts.²¹

INTRINSIC VALUE OF ARTS AND A WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION (7%)

We found five stories, 7%, that addressed the intrinsic value of the arts or the value of arts in providing a well-rounded education. All of these stories were either features or op-eds that advanced the idea that success in school is not solely defined by test scores. The quality of life and the sense of community in schools were featured in a *Washington Post* piece on the potential of the Strathmore Music Center.²² A *San Francisco Chronicle* article reported on how the enthusiasm of a drama teacher captivated his students and helped to teach them life's lessons.²³ A *New York Times* story positioned arts education as a bridge between cultures

I would rather teach a room full of low-performing students because I know through the arts they can succeed.
 – Teacher of the Year Awardee in Georgia

and music as a shared experience.²⁴ One op-ed in the *Washington Post*, “The Art of Education Success,” asserts that a broader curriculum prepares students for success at different levels and that standardized testing is just one component of a student’s overall development.²⁵ Another op-ed written by a professor of arts and education at Stanford University argues that the arts are not ornamental and are a critical part of a child’s education.²⁶

ARTS INTEGRATION (7%)

Arts integration stories comprised 7% of the topical analysis sample. Arts integration stories are classified as those stories that touch on the application of arts in other subjects, such as reading, writing, and math. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* wrote about teachers using creative themes from the television program “Star Trek” to teach children.²⁷ A story in the *Boston Globe* titled, “Student Art Program Based on Connections,” focused on students who were doing art and math together.²⁸ A segment on National Public Radio discussed how art was being used to help increase math test scores.²⁹

When the arts are a disciplinary partner with other subjects, they generate conditions that cognitive scientists say are ideal for learning. The curriculum becomes more hands-on and project based, offering what the University of Chicago researchers have called authentic and challenging work. Learning in all subjects becomes visible through the arts.
 – Executive Director of Arts Policy Center

MISCELLANEOUS (7%)

There were five miscellaneous stories in our sample. One focused on a report that generated controversy among arts advocates over which arguments should be used to increase support.³⁰ Another reported on parents intervening when their kids feel as though they do not “fit in” and as a result perform poorly in school. The story noted that often schools have a

particular focus that the parent feels is at odds with what their child needs, such as an emphasis on academics rather than the arts.³¹

DECLINE OF ARTS IN EDUCATION/LOW PRIORITY OF ARTS (3%)

Two items in the sample addressed the decline of the arts in general. The first was an op-ed discussing the decline of arts and literature in American culture.³² The second was a story about the need for an infusion of the arts into public institutions.³³

Classifying the Coverage of Arts Education

A closer look at the sample reveals that most stories about arts education were either new items or features.

Our sample illustrates that 39% of arts education stories were news articles and 31% were feature pieces. In typical media analysis findings, news stories usually represent about three-quarters (75%) of the stories found on a particular topic. Therefore, it's clear that arts education is less frequently considered as a timely and important issue, and journalists often explore other opportunities for covering arts education as feature stories.

Interestingly, opinion pieces made up 28% of arts education articles, with 14% classified as editorials, columns or op-eds, and another 14% as letters to the editor. While the news coverage of arts education may be disappointing, a considerable amount of the arts education discussion took place on the opinion pages of periodicals.

Based on this analysis, national radio and television reporters are not as inclined to cover this topic as much as print reporters. This lack of coverage suggests that arts education is not seen as a story beyond local borders, or perhaps that producers do not consider arts education stories "good television." It's important to remember that most Americans get their information from television news, so this is a discouraging finding.

A closer investigation at the location of the pieces in the arts education sample reveals even more about how the media covered this issue.

Table 3 indicates that arts education was often covered as a local or regional story, consisting of 43% of the articles. These regional stories mainly focused on a local arts program or center, an arts professional or teacher, or sacrificing school arts programs to gain a better academic curriculum, particularly to improve test scores.

TABLE 2: STORY TYPE TALLY

Story Type	Number of Stories	Percentage of Sample*
News	28	39%
Feature	22	31%
Op-ed, Editorials, Columns	10	14%
Letters	10	14%
Broadcast	2	3%
TOTAL	72	101%

*Percentage total may not equal 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 3: STORY LOCATION TALLY

Section	Number of Stories	Percentage of Sample*
Metro/Local	31	43%
Opinion (editorial/op-ed)	20	28%
Lifestyles/Arts	8	11%
National	5	7%
Special	3	4%
Front Page	2	3%
TV or Radio	2	3%
Business	1	1%
TOTAL	72	100%

*Percentage total may not equal 100% due to rounding.

"The paintings looked like colorful life-sized images of human bodies. But buried in the paint were lessons in mathematics. The artwork was created by a class of fifth-graders from Boston's Mather Elementary School. Working with teenage students from the Cambridge School of Weston, they chose colors or images to represent their five favorite things and then filled drawings of their bodies with several blocks of each color or image. The project was intended to teach concepts such as fractions, percentages, and the area of irregular shapes."

– Emily Shartin, Reporter, Boston Globe, March 31, 2005

The lifestyles and arts sections retained 11% of these articles, while just 7% of coverage was found in the national sections of newspapers, two of which discussed arts education in the context of No Child Left Behind.³⁴ Only 3% of the articles in our sample were front-page news.

TABLE 4: BREAKDOWN OF ARTS EDUCATION STORIES BY NEWS OUTLET

Outlet	Number of Articles	Percentage of Total Articles*
<i>Dallas Morning News</i>	12	17%
<i>Washington Post</i>	10	14%
<i>Boston Globe</i>	9	13%
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	9	13%
<i>Atlanta Journal-Constitution</i>	6	8%
<i>New York Times</i>	5	7%
<i>Philadelphia Inquirer</i>	5	7%
<i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>	5	7%
National Public Radio	2	3%
<i>Salon.com</i>	2	3%
<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	2	3%
<i>Associated Press</i>	2	3%
<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	1	1%
<i>Reuters</i>	1	1%
<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	1	1%
TOTAL	72	101%

*Percentage total may not equal 100% due to rounding.

The table above shows us that coverage was neither national nor distributed evenly among news outlets, and over half of arts education coverage (57%) was in four newspapers. More articles appeared in the local rather than in the national section, and most Americans are very hard pressed to read about arts education outside of their immediate communities.

The *Dallas Morning News* was the leading outlet covering arts education, with 17% of the total coverage. The *Washington Post* was second with 14% of the coverage, followed by *Boston Globe* (13%), *Los Angeles Times* (13%), and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (8%).

Interestingly, seven in 12 articles in the *Dallas Morning News* – more than half – were opinion pieces, including an op-ed written by a city council member supporting a local program that incorporates arts into education.³⁵

Additionally, the outlet editorialized their endorsement of a candidate to the Dallas Independent School District who “favors implementing a more ambitious curriculum with less attention to standardized tests, stressing math, science and the arts.”³⁶

However, the *New York Times* represents just 7% of arts education coverage, which is surprising considering that New York is an artistically and culturally thriving city, according to one of the articles in the sample.³⁷ Interestingly, the *New York Times* devotes more print space to the arts than any other national media outlet, but lags behind the *Dallas Morning News*, *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* in frequency of arts education stories.³⁸

National Public Radio and the *Wall Street Journal* each comprise 3% of the articles in the sample. The following sources were searched as well, but no articles on arts education were found during the time period analyzed: ABC News, CBS News, NBC News, CNN, Fox News Channel, *Newsweek*, *USA Today*, *U.S. News and World Report* and *Time*. As previously mentioned, this lack of attention supports the notion that arts education is not deemed an issue of national significance to important editors and reporters, and that interest in this issue is confined to just a few U.S. cities.

SPOKESPERSON ANALYSIS OF ARTS EDUCATION STORIES

In any communications effort, the messenger is as important as the message. The individuals quoted within a story have an impact on how that issue is covered and portrayed. In order to get a better idea of who was quoted in the sample and what they said, quotes were tallied from the arts education stories, yielding the following results shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5: SPOKESPERSON QUOTED TALLY

Classification	Number of Quotes	Percentage of Quotes*
School Officials	76	31%
General Public	47	19%
Arts Organization Professionals	43	18%
Public Officials	26	11%
Advocates	25	10%
Researchers, academics, authors	17	7%
Corporate professionals	8	3%
Consultants	2	1%
TOTAL	244	100%

*Percentage total may not equal 100% due to rounding.

“The commitment [to arts education] is critical for several reasons. The arts allow children to think in different ways and allow them to think about a number of subjects creatively. If children are not introduced to the arts early, they will not come back as adults”

— Michael Kaiser, President of the Kennedy Center, Washington Post, February 17, 2005

SCHOOL OFFICIALS (31%)

School officials were the most heavily quoted group in our sample, accounting for 31% of total quotes. People quoted in this category include teachers, school principals, school board staff, school committee members and superintendents.

School officials often provided comments on their school budget, particularly the difficulty of offering arts programs in schools. Journalists sometimes used the perspective of school officials in these articles to provide background on school budget issues, or local teachers discussing how creativity and art in a classroom can improve learning.

One article focused on a teacher who was being honored with a Teacher of the Year award. In the article, the teacher said, “We’re one of the few counties in the state of Georgia that understands the importance of art for all children.” She added, “The arts are an expression of one’s self, encompassing various learned skills and an abundance of creativity. The arts enable students to make connections across the curriculum while building self-esteem along the way.”³⁹

It’s interesting to note that several of the pieces also focused on arts education in relation to test scores. As a result of the No Child Left Behind Act public schools across the country are testing their students to measure progress and aptitude. These articles focused on increasing core requirements and standards at the cost of arts and music programs.

However, one article in particular highlighted a local Chicago school that has seen its test scores improve while maintaining its arts programs. The principal of the schools is quoted as saying that the improved test scores can be attributed to the school’s integration of the arts. “We were concerned we might see a negative impact on test scores... But actually, just the opposite happened.”⁴⁰

GENERAL PUBLIC (19%)

Members of the general public – or people not identified principally by their occupation – were heavily quoted in the arts education sample, accounting for 19% of total quotes. This group is typically ranked among the top groups quoted by reporters; it is common for reporters to include the “voice of the people” in their stories. Reporters quote the general public to add emotional appeal and an element of reality to stories.

In the arts education sample, we found that the general public was primarily made up of students at local K-12 schools, their parents, local area residents, or musicians, artists or actors who are not affiliated with an organization.

Parents in this sample were often quoted in the context of their satisfaction with a local arts program, the limited funds for arts in schools, or their concern for student success on standardized tests.

One article drew attention to a school band that did not have enough instruments for its students. A member of the school alumni association was concerned that because of limited funding for the music program, the school was “losing a lot of their talented students... those students are transferring to other schools that have more and better instruments.”⁴¹

Another article, also focusing on this high school band, quoted a parent who attributes the band’s financial situation to the school’s overemphasis on testing. “With the increased pressure of [state test] scores, they feel like the time could be better spent on core courses.”⁴²

ARTS ORGANIZATION PROFESSIONALS (18%)

In our sample, arts organization professionals accounted for 18% of total quotes, just behind the general public. This group represents music directors, arts program presidents, dance program founders, and members of a symphony or orchestra. Most arts organization professionals are quoted in support of the arts in local communities, or discussing the positive impact their program is having on the lives of students who attend.

For example, Bruce Orr, founder of the Texas Music Project, highlighted that cultural and arts programs are the key to revitalizing a city and attracting new business. “If the city of Dallas is serious about trying to create a climate that is going to win corporate moves like Boeing, then we have to dress ourselves up with the community institutions like the centers for performing arts, the Morton Meyerson Symphony Center and the DMA, which are community expressions of our appreciation for culture.”⁴³

Eliot Pfanstiehl, president and chief executive of Strathmore, a cultural center in Bethesda, Maryland, praises the significant contribution that the newest addition to his organization will have on the region and

children, as it will offer music classes, dance lessons, and a concert hall. He says, “I’ve been excited to watch the building rise, but that’s not half as fun as watching it fill with kids.”⁴⁴

Several arts organization professionals created their programs to solve the problem of the declining role arts education is playing in local schools. David Wish, founder of Little Kids Rock, established his local nonprofit to provide free music lessons and instruments to low-income children. “California is ranked last for access to arts education... think about that. You’re talking states like... well, let’s just say states with far fewer resources trounce California in musical education.”⁴⁵

PUBLIC OFFICIALS (11%)

Public officials made up 11% of total quotes in the arts education sample. Public officials are among the most important group of people who can be quoted in stories because of their significant agenda-setting power on public policy issues. The public officials quoted in the sample ranged from the president and U.S. senators to officials at the Department of Education, governors and mayors.

Journalists used public officials in this sample to comment on a new cultural center or program, budgetary concerns, or to address local education situations. This analysis uncovered that public officials take opposing views on the importance of arts education.

A few articles draw attention to the fiscal crisis in California, where arts and education are on Governor Schwarzenegger’s budget chopping block. California Department of Finance spokesman H.D. Palmer says, “There will be groups who believe education should have received more... but because of the fiscal crisis we inherited, we still have to live within our means.”⁴⁶

Yet other public officials take a more supportive role for arts and education. The county executive of Montgomery, Maryland, applauds the latest addition to the Strathmore, saying “It’s unbelievable, breathtaking, especially once you step inside the hall itself... Montgomery County will be a different place on February 6, the day after it opens.”⁴⁷

A Dallas City Council member wrote an op-ed to highlight the positive relationship between arts education and learning. She mentioned an *Education Week* article

authored by former Secretary of Education Rod Paige and Chairman Mike Huckabee of the Education Commission of the States, which cited data from the College Board that indicates “students of the arts outperformed their non-arts peers on the Scholastic Aptitude Test.”⁴⁸

Another article quotes Doug Herbert of the U.S. Department of Education saying that arts education is part of well-balanced curriculum supported by the No Child Left Behind Act.⁴⁹

ADVOCATES (10%)

Surprisingly, advocates represented only 10% of the sources journalists used to cover arts education. Advocates consist of both arts advocates and education advocates. Arts advocates are commonly quoted calling for support of local arts programs, and education advocates voice support for better, higher quality education in local schools.

One article highlights First Lady Laura Bush’s commitment to provide \$18 million from the federal government for the National Endowment of the Arts’ American Masterpiece program. However, when the bill reached Congress, the amount was reduced to \$2 million. A representative from the arts group says, “We are now reworking American Masterpieces with the available funds. We remain committed to rebuilding the endowment as an institution fully capable of meeting the country’s enormous needs in access to the arts and arts education.”⁵⁰

A *New York Times* article draws attention to a change in the daily schedule of the city’s middle schools, set forth by the Board of Regents. The policy allows educators at failing middle schools to choose how they spend their time, allowing them the freedom to spend more time on core subjects such as math and science, and less time on nonacademic subjects such as music and art. The president of the New York State Association of Family Consumer Science Educators is quoted as saying that this policy will allow schools to completely eliminate programs that are considered nonessential.⁵¹

RESEARCHERS, ACADEMICS, AND AUTHORS (7%)

Academics, researchers, and authors accounted for 7% of the total quotes in the sample. They were quoted when new studies that focused on arts education were released or when journalists wanted an expert to talk about trends in arts and education.

For example, a *Los Angeles Times* journalist used sociologist Kevin F. McCarthy at RAND as a source to comment on his organization's recent study claiming that the best way to gain public support for arts education is to connect it to bigger values such as enlightenment, enrichment and community-building. "People get involved because they think the arts are fulfilling; they don't do it to get better grades and increase their income."⁵²

The *Washington Post* published an op-ed in which Karen Seashore is referred to as a distinguished sociologist, and the writer uses her as an expert source to comment on an arts-integration program at a local school that primarily serves low-income children. She says the program is "one of the most powerful professional development experiences we have seen for large numbers of teachers."⁵³

CORPORATE PROFESSIONALS (3%)

Corporate executives and other professionals accounted for just 3% of total quotes. Journalists used corporate spokespeople as experts on the impact arts and culture can have on local businesses.

The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* published an op-ed written by Charles H. Green, Vice President of Sunrise Banks of Atlanta, in which he implores the Atlanta City Council to provide funding for arts. "The tangible returns from cultural investments include the expansion of economic activity, producing sales tax revenues; economic development, which revitalizes blighted areas (particularly downtowns) and elevates the property tax base; and education advances."⁵⁴

Another article quoted Arthur Blank, owner of the Atlanta Falcons NFL team, calling for a "quality-of-life community fund' that could provide ongoing support for arts, culture, sports and green space."⁵⁵

CONSULTANTS (1%)

Just two consultants were quoted in the analysis, accounting for 1% of total quotes. A Denver-based public policy consultant was in support of arts in the community, saying "There's no better investment in an urban area than in its creativity and quality of life."⁵⁶

A *San Francisco Chronicle* journalist used a California's public school financial consultant to comment on a recently defeated tax proposal that would have gone to

arts and music programs in the state's schools. The consultant says that the defeat "reflect[s] the struggle of public education these days."⁵⁷

Major Findings and Strategic Recommendations

Overall, there is a paucity of arts and arts education stories in the media, considering the scope of outlets utilized in this analysis. The following major findings and recommendations reflect the need for arts education advocates to increase the frequency of news coverage on the issue and to capitalize on available media opportunities for lasting impact.

• ARTS COVERAGE LACKS VISUAL IMPACT

Too often arts and arts education stories are mentioned obliquely in the context of public schools. Part of this can be attributed to the fact that despite their significance and power, visual representations of arts and art education are barely present in the media. Instead, arts education stories are usually relegated to print media publications that do not “show” the general public the essence of the arts. Media outreach strategies on behalf of arts organizations must take into consideration the broadcast media’s lack of coverage in this area and devise ways in which to engage broadcast media. One way is to attend journalism forums where editors and producers convene and share information from an industry perspective on what they are looking for in a potential news story. Other strategies include bringing broadcast media to classes and performances, providing pre-produced press releases and supplying background footage, or “B-roll.”

• BREAK THE SILENCE ON TOPICS OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE

This analysis suggests that powerful arts education voices are not being heard on the two dominant topics surrounding arts in education: budget shortfalls and what we have referred to as the “either/or” construct of standardized tests vs. arts in education. Since these frames in the media are reflective of the major challenges facing arts education advocates, compelling cases for arts education need to be articulated in the same stories reinforcing the endangerment of the arts. Prominent arts education voices should be inserted more fully into the dialogue on protecting and promoting arts education. Advocates should expand their efforts to seek news coverage on arts education issues.

• DECONSTRUCT THE EITHER/OR SCENARIO

Too often the media reinforces the notion that arts education and standardized tests are diametrically opposed to one another. The media needs to be engaged

in stories that convey arts education as an integral part of the fabric of quality education in the nation’s public schools. While communities nationwide are at times under great pressure to increasingly focus on standardized tests, the arts can be utilized as an ally and not viewed as counter-productive when objectively measuring student achievement. One way arts education can be seen as useful is by expanding the scope of educational outcomes to include civic and social indicators.

• HIGHLIGHT ART EDUCATION SUCCESSES

Neutralize the preponderance of “budget concern” stories by showcasing successful arts education programs. These examples can help districts identify reasons and resources to support the arts in their schools and to increase buy-in from the community. Such stories can also equip policymakers with information and public support needed to push for expanding the role of arts in public education. Policymakers can be influenced with direct communications and media stories that convey the value of arts education with “real life” examples.

• NATIONALIZE THE ISSUE

Coverage of arts education in the media is limited in scope and largely depicted as a local issue. Research has shown, however, that the deterioration of arts education in public schools is occurring across the country. Stepping up national presence of arts education stories could create opportunities in more national media, such as widely read newsweeklies.

• INCREASE THE NUMBER OF INFLUENTIAL VOICES ON THE SUBJECT

For more effective public advocacy on arts education, the leading voices should not be school officials and the general public. Public officials, advocates and researchers carry significant weight and need to have a stronger showing in media coverage, as was evidenced by the study conducted by the RAND Corporation on reframing the debate on the arts.

• DISCONNECT ARTS EDUCATION FRAME FROM FINANCIAL CONCERNS

Messages about the value of arts education should not directly address the details of school district budgets. Initiating public dialogue that begins and ends with the benefits that arts education offers to students is the best way to take the money issue off the table.

- **SHIFT THE IMPENDING SENSE OF DOOM FRAME**

Arts education spokespersons are frequently putting out “reactionary” responses that have been proven to be self-fulfilling: arts are being cut because of standardized tests, tightening budgets, etc. In this sense, the arts community positions itself as a victim, and not empowered to counter the alarming trend of disappearing arts education. Simply put, arts advocates need to do a better job of conveying the value of the arts.

- **REDEFINE PRIORITIES**

Opposition to arts education is anchored within debates over priorities. Too few stories invite reflection on what the overarching priorities of public schools need to be and why arts education has a place at the table in that discussion.

- **DIVERSITY OF VOICES**

Opinion pieces have a strong showing in this analysis, comprising almost one-third of analyzed news pieces. Different perspectives from the American public are weighing in on arts in education, including arts advocates, the business community, and parents. High visibility from a range of voices on opinion pages is good for the cause because it increases influence with policymakers.

APPENDIX A

List of Reporters

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Michael R. Blood
Ben Feller

ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION

Jennifer Brett
Laura Diamond
D. Aileen Dodd
Aixa M. Pascual
Maria Saporta

BOSTON GLOBE

Cynthia Cantrell
William Celis
Robert Knox
Mary MacDonald
Joyce Pellino Crane
Emily Shartin
Christine Wallgren

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Wendy Kummerer

DALLAS MORNING NEWS

Kristine Hughes
Linda James
Bill Lodge
Steve Quinn
Terrence Stutz

DETROIT FREE PRESS

Sarah A. Webster

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Tonya Alanez
Mike Boehm
Jennifer Delson
Erika Hayasaki
Duke Helfand
Peter Nicholas
Ashley Powers

NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO

Ari Shapiro
Nancy Solomon

NEW YORK TIMES

Elissa Gootman
David M. Herszenhorn
Corey Kilgannon
Meline Toumani

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Melanie Burney
Kristen A. Graham
Elisa Ung

REUTERS

Gary Hill

SALON.COM

Christopher Dreher
Kerry Lauerman

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

Bernadete Fay
Christopher Heredia
Meredith May
Carrie Sturrock
Delfin Vigil

WALL STREET JOURNAL

June Kronholz
Greg Sandow

WASHINGTON POST

Richard Harrington
V. Dion Haynes
Jennifer Lenhart
Valerie Strauss
Michael Toscano
Nancy Trejos
Jacqueline Trescott

Methodology

Electronic searches were performed using Nexis.com and Factiva, totaling 24 media outlets over a five-month period from December 2004 through April 2005. The sample consisted of the top 10 daily newspapers in the country, the top two nationally circulated newspapers, three national news magazines, six national broadcast outlets, two wire services and one Internet news source. These outlets have significant reach to a large segment of the population, especially opinion leaders, in the largest U.S. media markets.

THE OUTLETS IN THE ANALYSIS WERE:

<i>New York Times</i>	<i>Reuters</i>
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	<i>National Public Radio</i>
<i>Boston Globe</i>	<i>CNN</i>
<i>Washington Post</i>	<i>Fox News Channel</i>
<i>Chicago-Tribune</i>	<i>NBC News</i>
<i>Atlanta Journal Constitution</i>	<i>ABC News</i>
<i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>	<i>CBS News</i>
<i>Philadelphia Inquirer</i>	<i>Salon.com</i>
<i>Dallas Morning News</i>	
<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	
<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	
<i>USA Today</i>	
<i>Newsweek</i>	
<i>Time Magazine</i>	
<i>U.S. News & World Report</i>	
<i>Associated Press</i>	

PARAMETERS OF SEARCH

We constructed primary search terms “arts,” “arts in education” and “arts integration”- which were used interchangeably - in our telephone interviews, creative sessions, and focus groups. Recurring words that emerged from these inquiries were deemed to be relevant search terms since in many cases they were used to articulate why arts education was a good idea and/or what the reasons were for its disappearance from public schools. We categorized these words as criteria for secondary search terms and combined them with primary search

terms to maximize the number of relevant documents for analysis. While the public’s understanding of the arts is ambiguous at best, and while media coverage tends to conflate the arts with entertainment and popular culture, we were looking for arts coverage that fell into four categories:

- Arts in public schools
- Community and/or national arts programs with a participatory model that targets school age children as its core audience
- Arts as a component of enrichment and education
- Public policy debates and research that can help to further define arts/arts in education.

In addition:

- The story content had to include a focus on arts or arts education.
- The story had to have the word “arts,” “arts in education,” or “arts integration” in it and/or the secondary search terms: “test scores,” “standardized tests” or “creativity.”

These terms were used to hone in on specific topics related to arts and students. The term “arts” had to be further scrutinized because of its multiple meanings. We omitted stories that used “liberal arts” or “fine arts” since they invariably referred to either higher education or the arts in general.

The following is an account of all search terms used:

ARTS EDUCATION

ARTS INTEGRATION

INTEGRATED ARTS

ARTS AND. . .

Test scores

Teacher training

Standardized tests

School budget

NCLB

No Child Left Behind

Multiple intelligences

Public education

Community building

Public policy

Student achievement

ARTS EDUCATION AND . . .

Legislation

Creativity

Core curriculum

time period. Understanding that the usage of the word “arts” is widespread and that the media tend to conflate arts, entertainment, and popular culture, we sifted out stories that were related to schools and students. Our sample was eventually narrowed down to 72 articles.

- The story had to be 200 words or more, unless it was an opinion piece.
- The story had to appear between December 1, 2004 and April 30, 2005.

Initially, 1,296 articles were retrieved from the 24 outlets that contained our key search terms during the selected

APPENDIX B

Article Citations

- ¹ Jacqueline Trescott, "Promised Arts Effort Trimmed; Congress allots NEA \$2 million of Bush's \$18 million request," *Washington Post*, December 1, 2004.
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- ¹⁷ Christopher Dreher, "Richard Florida argues that unless America turns its cities into gay-friendly, hip creativity hubs like San Francisco, the best and brightest will opt for foreign climes," *Salon.com*, April 21, 2005.
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