



The Time Is Now!

Background

On March 13 2010, the Obama administration released a blueprint document that identified priorities for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Unfortunately, many of the proposals included in the Blueprint are based on federal education systems put in place under the George W. Bush Administration's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Among those proposals included in the Blueprint are sanctions-based models that continue to punish, rather than assist, underperforming schools, and accountability systems that advance a limited definition of student achievement based on high-stakes testing in a narrow set of skills.

In April and May of this year, advocates for arts-integrated education met with officials from the Obama Administration, the U.S. Department of Education, Congressional leaders on education issues, and the California Congressional Delegation. We learned that our Congressional and White House leaders share our concern about existing federal education programs that have shifted our focus away from comprehensive student growth toward narrow measurements in a limited set of skills. Congressional leaders shared the need to hear that education reform is a priority in their local communities before they champion the issue in the Capitol. We were also encouraged by members of the Obama Administration to organize our communities, amplify our voices, and raise the level of priority for education reform.

Our federal policy makers are presenting us with a critical opportunity to shape education reform efforts, *and the time for action is now*. NCLB-reauthorization has been delayed in 2010, thanks in large part to the work of education advocates who have pushed for more time for communities to present feedback and priorities around education reform. Congress and the Obama Administration are waiting to hear from us before they take up the conversation again in the next legislative year, and we must organize to make ourselves heard.

Call to Action

Now is the time to host an event in your community to highlight the critical role of arts-integrated learning in student growth and success. Each local event will provide an important opportunity to make ESEA reauthorization and arts learning an issue of *local* importance for state and federal elected leaders.

Collectively, events hosted throughout the state will build broader momentum for re-envisioned educational structures that support the growth and development of the whole child. To assist in amplifying the voices of California communities, we will provide a central web portal to catalogue and publicize events throughout the state.

Finally, our efforts in California will support the national campaign of the Americans for the Arts Action Fund to organize events throughout the nation that highlight the critical role of the arts in our communities.

Creating an Event

Using an existing event: Many of our local partners are planning “back to school” events in August and September, and these events offer a great opportunity to showcase your priorities for state and federal policy makers. In our toolkit, we provide templates and ideas for including your members of Congress and State Senators and Assembly Members at your event.

Planning a new event: Also included in our toolkit are ideas for planning new events to showcase the critical role of arts learning in our communities. Events can range from potlucks that create a safe environment for students, educators, and parents to share their priorities for education reform, to performances that showcase student learning in and through the arts, to formal meetings with members of Congress in their district offices.

***The Time Is Now!* Downloadable Toolkit**

1. A checklist of steps for planning your event
2. Instructions on requesting a meeting with your elected representatives or inviting them to your event
3. Template for a customizable press release
4. Template for a meeting or event request for your elected representatives
5. Policy materials: Policy proposals for ESEA reform, including materials to share with attendees at your event and brief documents for your elected representatives

