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## Arts|Learning Initiatives 2011

Arts|Learning develops and advocates policies, practices, programs and partnerships for a new level of excellence in pre-K—college teaching and learning, in and through the arts. Founded in 1999, A|L is the Massachusetts representative to the *Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network* of 33 state arts education alliances around the United States.

The following program areas support our roles as an education-reform agent, arts education advocate, catalyst—organizer of groups and conferences, and arts partnership developer:

### Statewide Program Initiatives

1. Statewide Arts Education Inventory
2. Statewide Arts Education Assessment
3. Turn-Around Schools
4. Innovation Schools
5. Professional Development Provider/Readiness Centers

### Ongoing Advocacy and Consulting Services

6. Arts Education Network
7. Evaluation & Consulting Services

## Statewide Program Initiatives

### 1. Statewide Arts Education Inventory

In 2009 the Boston Foundation released its report, *The Arts Advantage: Expanding Arts Education in the Boston Public Schools*, which gave a detailed survey of the status of arts education in most Boston Public Schools. Enormous disparities of access, equity, and quality of arts programs were revealed. As a result, this report activated the community to expand arts opportunities for all Boston school children.

Arts|Learning is seeking funding to do a similar survey of the arts in all of Massachusetts Schools. We propose not only to survey traditional public schools, but charter and private schools as points of comparison. Why is such a survey necessary? Because of the concept of local control in education, no subject is mandated in Massachusetts. Each town and school district decides what subjects to offer, and the frequency of instruction, resulting in significant inequalities of arts education offerings across the state. It is important to show where these inequities and lack of access are occurring, as well as to highlight model arts programs for other districts to emulate. We feel such a survey, when reported, will activate business, education, and government leaders to seek ways of improving arts programs across the state.

### 2. Statewide Arts Assessment for Schools

Other states, including Connecticut, have developed arts assessments to determine how well students are achieving state benchmarks in dance, music, theatre, and visual arts. Arts|Learning seeks funding to partner with the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) and others to develop arts assessment models, using

performance tasks, which may be administered on a voluntary basis in individual schools and districts. Such assessment results could be reported on participating school's "report card" that is posted on the ESE website. This would give parents and community members important data as to the quality of arts education programs in those districts that are implementing the assessments, as well as indicating how well schools are succeeding in providing students with meaningful ways of developing creativity and innovation.

### **3. Turn-Around Schools**

Arts|Learning has a cadre of highly experienced educators and artist educators on staff, as consultants, and volunteers, who have expertise in bridging the achievement gap through quality, sequential arts education programs. One such program is the Kodály music program at the Andrew Peabody School in Cambridge that has doubled academic success in at-risk students as shown on the MCAS and other measures in grades 3-4-5. Funding is sought for developing turn-around plans for implementing unique arts education approaches for improving school attendance, student engagement, school culture, and academic performance.

### **4. Innovation Schools**

Arts|Learning is seeking funding to develop Innovation School proposals, especially in at-risk rural and urban districts, that will offer an arts-infused education model as a way of closing the achievement gap and to provide artistic and academic excellence. The innovation school model was created as part of the MA Education Reform Act of 2010.

An innovation school is a "public school, operating within a public school district, that is established for the purpose of improving school performance and student achievement through increased autonomy and flexibility," and as such fills the gap between traditional public schools (which are fully under the policies of the local school district) and charter public schools (which are fully independent of the local school district). The flexibility granted an innovation school may be related to:

- curriculum,
- budget,
- school schedule and calendar,
- staffing policies and procedures,
- school district policies and procedures, and
- professional development.

Innovation schools may be either existing schools or new schools, may serve students from multiple school districts, or may be virtual (online) distance-learning programs. Currently Arts|Learning is working with the Boston Public Schools to develop a preK-8 Arts Innovation School.

### **5. Professional Development Provider/Readiness Centers**

Arts|Learning has years of experience offering quality arts education professional development to classroom teachers, arts educators, superintendents, principals, school committee members, teaching artists, and community arts leaders through symposia, courses, and conference presentations. Arts|Learning is seeking funding to provide training, especially to school policy makers (administrators, curriculum coordinators, school committee members) and non-arts classroom teachers at the six Massachusetts regional "Readiness Centers." Unveiled in 2009, Readiness Centers will help improve the theory and action of teaching by providing educators with greater access to established classroom teaching practices, proven strategies in the use of student data to help inform instruction, and increased and more focused professional development opportunities.

The six Readiness Centers and the primary partners are as follows.

- **Berkshire Readiness Center:** Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, Berkshire Community College and the Berkshire Compact for Higher Education.
- **Central Massachusetts Readiness Center:** Fitchburg State College, Massachusetts Elementary School Principals' Association and Worcester State College.
- **Greater Boston Readiness Center:** Framingham State College, UMASS Boston, Wheelock College, Massachusetts Bay Community College and the Greater Boston Regional Collaboratives Organization.
- **Northeast Regional Readiness Center:** Salem State College, UMASS Lowell, North Shore Community College, Middlesex Community College, Northern Essex Community College, Merrimack College, Endicott College and Gordon College.
- **Pioneer Valley Readiness Center:** Westfield State College, UMASS Amherst, Hampshire Educational Collaborative and the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative.
- **Southeastern Massachusetts Readiness Center:** Bridgewater State College, UMASS Dartmouth, Bristol Community College, Cape Cod Community College, Massasoit Community College, Massachusetts Maritime Academy, Brockton Workforce Investment Board, New Bedford Workforce Investment Board, Southeast Collaboratives Regional Organization, Lighthouse Superintendents' Group and the Lighthouse Assistant Superintendents' Group.

### **Ongoing Advocacy and Consulting Services**

#### **6. Arts Education Network**

Arts|Learning continues to feed and nourish a statewide network to secure equitable, accessible, and quality arts education programs for all Massachusetts school children in the areas of dance, music, theatre, and visual arts. This network consists of a diverse community of arts education advocates: teachers, administrators, artists, parents, and public officials. Research studies continue to support the importance of the arts for developing the whole child, improving cognition and academic success, enhancing school attendance and culture, and stimulating artistic and aesthetic awakening and growth.

In addition to the benefits of arts education programs for each and every child, what is also at stake here is the survival of our established artistic institutions. It is a known national trend that audience attendance at our symphony orchestras, theatre and dance performances, and art museums has declined in most areas over the past decade. Without sequential and thorough artistic training in schools, including trips to cultural institutions and live in-school performances, these trends will continue in the future. Funding is requested to support Arts|Learning's arts education advocacy network.

#### **7. Evaluation & Consulting Services**

Arts|Learning currently has a cadre of highly experienced educators, administrators, and teaching artists who have the expertise to evaluate programs and proposals for Innovation Schools, Charter Schools, Pilot Schools, and grant funding. Our consultants include current and former public and charter school leaders (superintendent, principal, fine arts coordinator), former state secretary of education, higher education experts in various arts domains (dance, music, theatre, visual arts), business leaders, experts in implementing arts integration curricula, and teaching artists. Please contact us for fees and services.