



Grantmakers in the Arts

GIA Arts Education

Arts Education Funders Coalition Policy Agenda and Successes

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Over the past three years, the Arts Education Funders Coalition (AEFC), working with Penn Hill Group in Washington, D.C., has been advocating for systemic inclusion of arts education policy in federal law. This focus has been to ensure equitable access for students and individuals, especially students of color and low-income individuals. Our work has focused on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), early childhood education, the Older Americans Act, as well as laws impacting juvenile justice and delinquency. Our goal is to ensure that state and local leaders can leverage our policy successes to provide access to arts education and positively impact our nation's students, seniors and young adults.

Below is a brief summary of our areas of work, including the successes we have had with Congress and the Administration on the adoption of our policy agenda.

Early Childhood Education

Last year, Congress sought to advance President Obama's call for expanded State Pre-K programs. While these bills did not become law, the AEFC successfully advocated for the inclusion of arts as an approach to helping preschool children learn, which was included in both Senate and House versions of these bills.

The AEFC built upon this work when Congress sought to fund the Preschool Development Grant program. Early efforts by the Obama Administration to implement this program did not initially include the arts as a required component of the early childhood curriculum that state and local programs would utilize. After AEFC work, the arts are now a required approach. In 2014, 18 states were awarded \$250 million and an additional \$250 million will be awarded in 2015. The AEFC continues to advocate for funds for this initiative and to encourage states, particularly state arts agencies, and local early childhood organizations to take advantage of these new resources to support arts education.

Elementary and Secondary Education

The cornerstone of AEFC advocacy efforts has been to systemically include arts education in programs under the ESEA, the largest Federal commitment to improving K-12 education. The AEFC's work is aimed at allowing State and local school leaders to use federal funding to support arts education in improving student achievement, teacher training, and afterschool programs.

Congress was not successful in completing its work to reauthorize ESEA. In the past few months however, both House and Senate education committees have advanced ESEA legislation with much of the AEFC agenda included. The AEFC will continue to work to ensure these policy successes are signed into law.

Older Americans Act

The Older Americans Act provides services to seniors to ensure they can work and live in their communities. The AEFC agenda builds upon research that shows that the arts can be a powerful tool to improve the lives of American seniors. As Congress turns to reauthorize this law later this year, the AEFC will advocate for the systemic inclusion of the arts in programs supporting our nation's seniors.

Juvenile Justice

Juveniles who encounter the law enforcement system, or who are at risk of doing so, can benefit from evidence-based programs designed to reduce juvenile delinquency and recidivism. Two federal laws, the Second Chance Act and the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, support programs which help state and local governments and organizations address the needs of youth and young adults who encounter, or are at risk of encountering, the legal system. As Congress turns its attention to these laws in the coming years, the AEFC will advocate for the arts as a means to reduce and prevent juvenile delinquency.