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ABSTRACT

Research examining the impact of arts education on workforce preparation has confirmed that programs incorporating the arts can be educational, developmentally rich, and cost-effective ways of providing students with the skills needed for productive participation in today's economy. Arts education has been shown to help students develop basic, higher-order thinking, and affective skills needed for workplace success. Studies have shown that young people who study the arts show heightened academic standing, a strong capacity for self-assessment, and a secure sense of their own ability to plan and work for a positive future. Studies of arts-based education programs for general, at-risk, and incarcerated youth populations in 10 states have documented their effectiveness and illustrated how schools can make strategic use of states' cultural resources. Governors seeking to take advantage of the arts as a workforce development strategy can take the following policy actions: (1) include arts education as an element of comprehensive education reform legislation; (2) encourage artists to participate in community development programs; (3) leverage the private sector's willingness to contribute to the arts by providing seed funding and starter grants to innovative arts-based education programs; and (4) facilitate collaboration between arts educators and juvenile detention centers to promote programs for detained youth. (Contains 27 endnotes.) (MN)

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NGA Center for
BEST PRACTICES

Issue Brief

Economic & Technology Policy Studies
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The Impact of Arts Education on Workforce Preparation

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Summary

The arts provide one alternative for states looking to build the workforce of tomorrow—a choice growing in popularity and esteem. The arts can provide effective learning opportunities to the general student population, yielding increased academic performance, reduced absenteeism, and better skill-building. An even more compelling advantage is the striking success of arts-based educational programs among disadvantaged populations, especially at-risk and incarcerated youth. For at-risk youth, that segment of society most likely to suffer from limited lifetime productivity, the arts contribute to lower recidivism rates; increased self-esteem; the acquisition of job skills; and the development of much needed creative thinking, problem solving and communications skills. Involvement in the arts is one avenue by which at-risk youth can acquire the various competencies necessary to become economically self-sufficient over the long term, rather than becoming a financial strain on their states and communities.

This *Issue Brief*¹ provides examples of arts-based education as a money- and time-saving option for states looking to build skills, increase academic success, heighten standardized test scores, and lower the incidence of crime among general and at-risk populations. It offers examples drawn from states that are utilizing the arts in education and after-school programs, and it provides policy recommendations for states looking to initiate or strengthen arts education programs that improve productivity and foster workforce development.

Human Capital's Role in the New Economy

The New Economy has reshaped previously held beliefs regarding productivity. Knowledge has supplanted labor-intensive careers as the preferred path to economic growth and stability. Human capital has become the primary determinant of a region's economic vitality. Today's challenging workplace demands academic skills (i.e., a college degree) as well as "intangible" assets such as flexibility, problem-solving abilities, and interpersonal skills. Old hierarchical, boundary-laden, and static organizational structures are giving way to new kinds of "learning organizations" with flattened hierarchies. More decision-making and problem solving authority rests in the hands of front-line employees, and

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self-managed, cross-functional teams are replacing bureaucratic assembly lines. Furthermore, extensive cross training, teamwork, and flexible work assignments are taking the place of elaborate work rules.²

The Workforce Skills of Today and Tomorrow

Today’s knowledge-based economy relies on a combination of academic prowess and fluency with foundation skills relating to communication, personal and interpersonal relationships, problem solving, and management of organizational processes. The skills necessary to acquire and retain a job in today’s workforce include:³

Basic Skills	Higher-Order Thinking Skills	Affective Skills and Traits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Oral communications ☐ Reading, especially understanding ☐ Basic arithmetic ☐ Writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Problem solving ☐ Learning skills, strategies ☐ Creative, innovative thinking ☐ Decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Dependability and responsibility ☐ Positive attitude towards work, following instructions ☐ Conscientiousness, punctuality ☐ Efficiency ☐ Interpersonal skills and cooperation ☐ Working as a team member ☐ Self-confidence, positive self-image ☐ Adaptability, flexibility ☐ Enthusiasm, motivation ☐ Self-discipline, self-management ☐ Appropriate dress, grooming ☐ Honesty, integrity, ability to work without supervision

The Arts Help Build New Economy Workforce Skills

The arts are one tool used by states to enhance workforce readiness for students in both the general and at-risk populations. Programs incorporating the arts have proven to be educational, developmentally rich, and cost-effective ways to provide students the skills they need to be productive participants in today’s economy. Arts programs combine academic and workforce development skills in a manner attractive to participants of all age groups and economic backgrounds. Children raised in higher socioeconomic brackets and exposed to the arts through other sources such as families and communities reap the benefits of these activities. In general, at-risk children lack the resources available to other children, are less likely to be introduced

Schooling in the arts has cognitive effects that help prepare students for the 21st-century workforce.

Research reveals that when young people study the arts they show heightened academic standing, a strong capacity for self-assessment, and a secure sense of their own ability to plan and work for a positive future.

to the arts, and lose out on the important educational advantages that the arts can provide. Arts education can have a beneficial and enriching effect on all children, but in some cases, the effects on at-risk children are even more dramatic, especially among those from low-income situations.

Research reveals that when young people (both general and at-risk populations) study the arts they show heightened academic standing, a strong capacity for self-assessment, and a secure sense of their own ability to plan and work for a positive future. The report, *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning* reviews research conducted by scholars from Columbia University's Teachers College, Harvard University, Harvard's Project Zero, Stanford University, the University of California at Los Angeles, and the University of Connecticut.⁴ The researchers found that arts education can enhance academic achievement, reach students on the margins of the educational system, create an effective learning environment, and connect learners' experiences to the world outside of school. Multiple studies cite strong positive impacts across socioeconomic groups with respect to both academic and personal success.

Other studies of the effects of arts instruction on learning have found that children who study the arts are:

- four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement;
- elected to class office within their schools three times as often;
- four times more likely to participate in a math and science fair;
- three times more likely to win an award for school attendance; and
- four times more likely to win an award for writing an essay or poem.⁵

In addition to academic success, students introduced to arts education have heightened soft skills. In a study of more than 2000 middle school students in four states, researchers at Columbia University found that children receiving at least three years of in-school arts instruction scored significantly higher on quantitative tests of creative thinking than their peers with less arts instruction. Students with more arts instruction had index scores averaging 20 points higher than their peers on measures of creative thinking, fluency, originality, elaboration and resistance to closure.⁶

Some critics have argued that arts curricula may not produce increased standardized test results. An analysis of 188 previous studies describing correlations between the arts and performance on mathematics and verbal skills tests found a causal link between studying the arts and improved academic performance in only 3 of 10 areas studied. Researchers Ellen Winner and Lois Hetland, in Harvard's Reviewing Education and the Arts project, urged caution with respect to justifying arts education programs on the sole basis of instrumental grounds such as test scores.⁷

Nonetheless, arts education appears to develop cognitive skills and traits which may or may not be easily measured through standardized testing. According to Dr. Elliot W. Eisner of Stanford University, schooling in the arts has cognitive effects that help prepare students for the 21st-century workforce.⁸ Eisner identifies key competencies of cognitive growth that are developed through an education in the arts. These include:

- perception of relationships;
- skills in finding multiple solutions to problems;
- attention to nuance;
- adaptability;
- decision-making skills; and
- visualization of goals and outcomes.

School districts are finding that the arts develop many skills applicable to the “real world” environment. In a study of 91 school districts across the nation, evaluators found that the arts contribute significantly to the creation of the flexible and adaptable knowledge workers that businesses demand to compete in today’s economy.⁹

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In addition to supporting general workforce competencies, arts competencies in themselves can be marketable skills in today’s economy. For instance, today’s media workers are applying arts skills in careers such as television and film production, Web site design, and advertising. Design skills taught through the arts are both professional and technical and can lead students to careers in the architecture or fashion industries. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has counted more than 2 million full-time workers in artist occupations.¹⁰ In this way, workforce development programs that involve the arts may provide dual benefits, opening up careers in the creative industries for some students while enhancing the overall workforce preparedness of others.

Arts Based Education for General, At-Risk, and Incarcerated Youth Populations

As states continue to focus on the future development of their workforces, arts-based education proves to be a viable option for developing skills necessary for increased productivity and prosperity. The following programs highlight several states’ best practices in arts education for general, at-risk, and incarcerated youth.

Incorporating the Arts as a Foundation for the General Population

Schools throughout the country are implementing arts-focused curricula targeting the general population to create a more educated workforce with a set of well-rounded and applicable skills. Programs in **California,**

Connecticut, Mississippi, New York, Ohio, and South Carolina have shown positive outcomes such as higher test scores, increased academic achievement, lower absenteeism, and soft skills development beginning at an early age.

The **Connecticut** Commission on the Arts' HOT (Higher Order Thinking) Schools Program is an educational process that creates child-centered schools through the arts. Initiated in 1994, the commission works with 24 HOT "laboratory" schools situated strategically in 22 districts across Connecticut. The program affects over 5,000 students and more than 500 educators from diverse rural, suburban and urban communities. In a HOT school, teaching for understanding assumes more importance than schedules, educators welcome parents into the school, and teachers adapt the curriculum to meet the learner's needs. The HOT Schools Program arrives at child-centered education through a cluster of strategies that stimulate change in the school's culture—its symbols, myths and educational expectations, both for students and teachers. The HOT Schools Program provides each school with resident artists (up to five per year), curriculum development grants, technical assistance, workshops, principals' retreats, peer sessions, and an annual six-day summer institute. Schools commit themselves to creating school cultures in which learning in, about, and through the arts in a democratic setting enables each child's voice to be heard and celebrated.

Outcomes: Through these arts-infused curricular innovations, HOT schools are promoting intellectual, psychosocial and academic growth. When the program began in 1994, six schools were selected through a competitive application process. Today the program has expanded to include 24 schools in Connecticut and has become a model adopted by schools in **New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Delaware.**¹¹

In **Mississippi**, the Whole Schools Project expands regular classroom instruction to include the arts and promotes collaborations between arts and classroom teachers to create arts-infused instruction. Currently, Mississippi has 20 schools (more than 15 percent of all school districts) participating in this model of school reform. All members of the school community play an important role in this initiative: superintendent, principal, arts and classroom teachers, students, parents, community organizations, and businesses. The Art Commission's goals for this initiative are to foster sequential, comprehensive arts education programs that serve every student in a single school and offer the prospect of being replicated in other parts of Mississippi.

Outcomes: The measured results of Mississippi's arts-infused instruction include enhanced curriculum assessment practices (as measured schoolwide); increased student engagement (as measured by lower absenteeism rates and fewer discipline problems); and increased student achievement (as measured by classroom grades and higher test scores).¹²

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Schools can make strategic use of the state's cultural resources, including artists, museums, music companies, nature centers, community organizations, and writing and literacy programs.

New York's Empire State Partnership (ESP) is an interagency initiative that unites the New York Department of Education's strategic plan for raising standards for all students with the New York State Council on the Arts' (NYSCA) goal of integrating and reasserting the arts into all the classrooms in New York. Established in 1997, the ESP project is designed to enhance teaching and learning. Schools can make strategic use of the state's vast cultural resources, including artists, museums, music companies, nature centers, community organizations, and writing and literacy programs. Partnerships between classrooms and cultural institutions are built around long-term school strategies to build both tangible and intangible skills. Teacher professional development, an important component of the program, helps build teachers' capacity to use the arts as a classroom resource. The goal of the ESP project is to establish the arts as a discipline on par with other curricular disciplines and as a highly effective, widely tested means to teach skills and knowledge in other core curriculum subjects. To date, ESP has involved over 34,000 students and 1,400 teachers and principals.

Outcomes: In a preliminary evaluation, school principals cite anecdotal evidence that the ESP is providing students with more sustained learning experiences than traditional approaches to the curriculum can provide. Some individual school sites are also observing improved school attendance and gains in reading skills among some students.¹³ The next steps for the ESP initiative are to secure the empirical data needed to assess student academic performance across multiple school sites and to evaluate how the ESP practices affect teachers' student assessment practices.

In Ohio, the cities of Hamilton and neighboring Fairfield resolved during 1990 to map out a cultural action plan for their schools, beginning at the elementary level. The program outlined in the plan called SPECTRA+ (Schools, Parents, Educators, Children, Teachers Rediscover the Arts) was implemented during the 1992 school year. SPECTRA+ is a methodology that places the arts in the daily curriculum as a basic subject. The program has five major components: arts instruction, arts integration, artists-in-residence, professional development for teachers, and evaluation and advocacy. These components combine into a curriculum that involves art, music, dance, drama, literature, and media arts. Each school must offer arts instruction in music, visual art, dance, and drama at least one hour per week, and classroom teachers are trained to deliver academic subjects through the arts by teaming and planning with art teachers and artists. As a result, students receive direct arts instruction as well as lessons that combine, for instance, math with music or science with drama.

Outcomes: SPECTRA+ schools showed significant gains in student creativity, teacher/student attitudes, academic and thinking skill improvement, attendance, discipline, school climate, student self-esteem, and parental self-esteem (children's belief that parents are proud of them). These outcomes were documented through an independent evaluation that

These outcomes were documented through an independent evaluation that included pre- and post-program testing in four schools, as well as through comparisons between SPECTRA+ schools and other schools in the Hamilton-Fairfield area.¹⁴ These outcomes have heralded the expansion of SPECTRA+ in other school districts across Ohio, as well as in **California and New York**.

Initiated in **South Carolina** in 1987, the Arts in Basic Curriculum (ABC) Project is a statewide initiative to ensure that every child from preschool through college has access to quality, comprehensive education in the arts, including dance, music, drama, visual arts, and creative writing. It is directed cooperatively by the South Carolina Arts Commission and the South Carolina Department of Education. ABC was founded on the premise that the arts are an indispensable part of a complete education because quality education in the arts significantly adds to the learning potential of students. Arts education complements learning in other disciplines and establishes a foundation for success in school and lifelong learning.

Outcomes: Educators report that the adoption of an arts-centered school curriculum has positively affected student and teacher attitudes, student behavior, parent participation, and other key variables that are linked to general student achievement.¹⁵

Developed by the **California Arts Council**, the Arts Education Demonstration Project targets K-12 public schools to develop best practices in arts education. These models demonstrate how arts education in the classroom can increase art skills while encouraging attitudinal and behavioral changes, such as reduced truancy and reduced dropout rates. The program is a "working laboratory" designed to develop viable arts education models that document why and how they are successful, so that other schools and communities can emulate what is learned and adapt these practices to new sites and new student populations.

Outcomes: Currently, WestEd Laboratory is conducting a rigorous evaluation of the program. This assessment of 56 school sites will collect exact data on student attendance, behavior and self-concept and will also measure program outcomes on students' basic skills and higher-order cognitive skills. This comprehensive evaluation will be available in the fall of 2002.

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The cost for each participant in Florida's arts intervention program is only \$850 per year—compared with as much as \$28,000 per youth in the typical juvenile boot camp.

The Arts Build Skills for the At-Risk Population

Because of challenging neighborhood environments, lack of role models and challenged school systems, at-risk youth are most in need of educational programs and workforce development training; yet, they are the least likely to receive the necessary assistance. Not only are disadvantaged youth likely to earn less money and pay fewer taxes as a result, but significant funds are also spent combating or compensating for poor social and academic environments.¹⁶

By investing in arts-based prevention programs for youth, states are working to reduce later unemployment, corrections, and public assistance costs. In the words of Richard Romley, Maricopa County District Attorney in Arizona, “As a prosecutor, I know that crime prevention pays far greater dividends than prosecution. To this end, I make RICO funds available to after-school arts and social programs for at-risk children that stimulate imagination, develop skills and contribute to character development. Children whose hearts and minds are nourished and challenged in wholesome ways—such as by art, dance, theater, and sports—are much less likely to succumb to the lure of crime.”¹⁷

After-school programs have joined forces with the arts to bridge this gap and foster a developed workforce. The programs have been successful through a simple combination of the arts, academics, and social counseling, and the reinforcement of necessary soft skills. Not only have violence, drug abuse and alcohol abuse in communities decreased through arts-based prevention programs, but programs have documented increases in students' likelihood to set further educational or career goals. Gains in self-esteem, discipline, problem-solving and decision-making—all skills necessary to actively participate in today's workforce—have also been noted.

Programs in **Florida, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas** are among a growing number of states proving that the arts can cost-efficiently help create an otherwise untapped workforce resource.

Begun in Ft. Myers, **Florida**, in 1989, Success Through Academic and Recreational Support (STARS) is a multifaceted arts studies and crime prevention program for at-risk youth that offers a variety of classes, including modern dance, African Folk dance, poetry, creative writing and vocal arts, as well as tutorials in math, reading, and computers. The cost for each participant in Florida's arts intervention program is only \$850 per year—compared with as much as \$28,000 per youth in the typical juvenile boot camp. Participation in STARS is a family affair: Both parents and children must agree to participate in the activities. Children are required to maintain good behavior and at least a C average in school.

Outcomes: At the start of the STARS Program, 75 percent of the children were making less than a C average; now 80 percent are making a C average or better. Since the program's inception, juvenile crime has dropped 28 percent, and for youth ages 11 and 12, the rate of recidivism has dropped 64 percent.¹⁸

The Massachusetts Cultural Council's Youth Reach Initiative, founded in 1996, is a statewide program that enlists arts organizations and other community groups in addressing the needs of their young people. The program serves children with disabilities, school dropouts, homeless youth, young people facing neighborhood violence, court-involved youth, runaways, and pregnant or parenting teens. Currently, Youth Reach supports 38 partnerships across the state. One example of its work is Artists for Humanity's City Teens Design Company. It is a comprehensive, year-round, after-school and summer program that gives inner-city Boston teens a place to get away from the streets and work closely with artists. Participants receive instruction in painting, sculpture, photography, ceramics, silk-screen, graphic design, entrepreneurship, and teamwork.

Outcomes: Before Youth Reach, students' typical goals were to finish or leave school, work at a grocery store or hotel laundry or collect social security income. After their experience in Youth Reach, students have excelled in school and many have sought postsecondary education and careers in nursing, teaching, or technical theatre.¹⁹

The Manchester Craftsmen's Guild (MCG), was created in 1968 as an answer to a rapidly deteriorating Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, neighborhood—Manchester—home to many at-risk children with little prospect of graduating from high school, let alone attending college. MCG is an arts education organization that employs visual and performing arts to educate and inspire inner-city youth to become productive citizens. Its success lies in its ability to combine academic guidance, high school and college entry counseling, and development of self-esteem, decision-making, and team building skills—resources ordinarily not available to children in the Manchester neighborhood. The goal of the program is not to create artists, but to use the arts as a means through which students learn the skills necessary to perform as productive members of society.

Outcomes: With an 80-percent college attendance rate, this arts program has been so successful that it currently is being replicated in five cities nationwide (Baltimore, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, and St. Louis) and has attracted attention from technological powerhouses such as eBay, Hewlett Packard and Cisco Systems.²⁰ Through successful outcomes, MCG has overcome the common misperception that using the arts to teach workforce skills only produces artists—not a skilled workforce.

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Using the arts to help incarcerated youth become productive members of society contributes to regional stability and vitality.

Created in 1985 as an after-school program to provide an alternative to community despair and to standard education and social programs, The Boys Choir of Harlem in **New York** has grown into a nationally recognized school and after-school program. This program uses an integrated model of education, counseling and the performing arts to prepare inner-city youth to become disciplined, confident, motivated, and successful citizens. Five days a week from 8:30 in the morning until 6:30 in the evening, young boys and girls in grades 4–12 study academics and music at the Choir Academy, which operates in partnership with the local school district. After school, they rehearse for up to three hours and participate in counseling and tutoring sessions.

Outcomes: The program's progress is measured by college-bound participants. To date, 98 percent of the participants have gone on to college.²¹

Also in **New York** is El Puente Leadership Center, located in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, in one of the poorest Latino communities in the state. El Puente is a community center that has an after-school and weekend program with rigorous participation requirements for its members. Members pursue a wide range of artistic interests such as dance, drama, music, videography, and visual arts under the guidance of accomplished artists. El Puente's staff develops individualized plans with participants that focus not only on the arts, but also on educational, vocational, personal and social issues. El Puente houses resident performing companies made up of trained young artists from the program and provides a stage for visiting local, national, and international companies and artists.

Outcomes: El Puente's model for youth and community development is being replicated through a growing national association that presently includes three New York centers, two centers in **Massachusetts** and a center in formation in San Diego, **California**.²²

Texas' Juvenile Gang Prevention Program was initiated in 1991 by the Dallas Parks and Recreation Department in response to an influx of gang activities. The program offers free classes at four city recreation centers, where participants between the ages of 10 and 18 create plays and visual works of art based on personal experiences including gang violence and drug and alcohol abuse.

Outcomes: Now in its 10th year, the program has an 80-percent attendance rate and is noteworthy because rival gang members work together on projects and relate to one another while working collaboratively on projects to achieve a positive outcome.²³

The Arts Develop Skills in Incarcerated Youth

The arts are being used for skill development for a population that is most without resources, role models, or positive futures—incarcerated youth. Through the intervention of the arts, young people are taught job skills that will prepare them for a life outside of prison. These programs seek to develop skills that put young inmates on par with others in their age range. Using the arts to help incarcerated youth become productive members of society, with the skills and attributes necessary for personal financial prosperity, contributes to regional stability and vitality. **Alabama, Mississippi, South Dakota, and Washington** are among several states that have instituted such programs and have had success that shows in lower recidivism rates, fewer behavioral problems, and a marked increase in job skills for outgoing inmates.

Writing Our Stories, a partnership between the **Alabama** Arts Council, the Alabama Writers' Forum and the Alabama Department of Youth Services, places writers-in-residence in youth detention facilities in three locations in Alabama. The program is designed to help 12-15 year old students develop nonviolent means of self expression and skills for coping with difficulties in their lives. Incarcerated youth participate for nine months in poetry and creative writing classes, which culminate in the publication of formal anthologies of student works. Most participants enter the program with reading skills five to six levels below the eighth-grade level. Writing Our Stories helps build reading and writing proficiency while providing a constructive, creative outlet for young offenders.

Outcomes: The program proved so successful at its original pilot site in 1999 that it has since been expanded to several other sites across the state and now reaches approximately 150 juvenile offenders. The initiative has been cited as a model program by the corrections community. Documenting the approach in *Corrections Today* journal, managing editor Susan Clayton writes, "The program has proved that a collaboration between a juvenile justice system and the arts community can change lives."²⁴

The goal of **Washington's** Experimental Gallery is to teach responsible citizenship through the arts and the humanities. The Gallery developed the Arts Program for Incarcerated Youth in partnership with the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services and the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration. Youth in six juvenile detention facilities voluntarily take part in the 12- to 18-month program. In all the centers, workshops in creative writing, painting, drama, graphic design, sculpture, and videography are led by community artists and humanities scholars at the peak of their professions. These artists also provide mentoring and role modeling as they guide the students through projects that address real-life issues, such as drugs, violence, abuse, neglect, and disease. In these workshops students create products that can be shared with the community.

Students in the Washington's Experimental Gallery overcome their behavioral problems by 75 percent and are 50 percent less likely to commit another crime.

For example, participants created a film with KCTS-TV, a local PBS station, that aired nationally in 1999. The film focused on their fears of returning to the community and the community's reciprocal fear of them. This kind of visibility brings the young participants a sense of achievement and educates the communities to which they return. In addition, the Experimental Gallery runs a small apprenticeship program that allows young offenders to continue to develop their potential when they return to their communities.

Outcomes: Because of the success of the Arts Program for Incarcerated Youth, the Washington State Historical Society's Capital Museum will be developing a museum school in one of the maximum-security facilities over the coming year. Another sign of success is that students in the Experimental Gallery overcome their behavioral problems by 75 percent and are 50 percent less likely to commit another crime.²⁵

Mississippi also is using the arts to develop skills among juvenile offenders. Core Arts was initiated in 1998 after an arts program at a juvenile detention center in Columbus, Mississippi, produced impressive decreases in violence and improvements in behavior. The program, now operational in three counties, pairs professional artists and arts organizations with counselors, social workers, judges, housing authorities and other community resources to develop arts programs for various settings. First, the program strives to teach job-related skills, such as punctuality, discipline, focus and the creation of products. In stressing these skills, Core Arts trains young people to eventually to get and keep a job. The second focus of the program is working to achieve a vision—developing patience and problem-solving skills that apply not only to making art but also to other areas of life.²⁶

Outcomes: Although documentation of results for the Core Arts programs is still at an early stage, the program has shown a reduction in recidivism and improvements in overall behavior.

Initiated at the request of Governor William Janklow, the ArtsCorr program, involves a partnership among the **South Dakota** Department of Corrections, the South Dakota Arts Council and South Dakotans for the Arts. ArtsCorr places professional visual, theater and literary artists in long-term residencies in correctional facilities that house juveniles between the ages of 12 and 18. The artists, who receive special training in dealing with this population, work with the students on projects ranging from creative writing to full-scale musical productions. ArtsCorr also integrates the arts into chemical dependency programs, in-take assessments, and other education programs.²⁷

Outcomes: Although a formal evaluation of ArtsCorr's impact has not yet been conducted, the department of corrections has been impressed enough with the results to date to assume full funding for the program.

Diverse arts education programs—both in and out of school curricula—have proven to be valuable options for states seeking to develop advanced workforce skills.

State Strategies and Policy Options

There are a number of policy actions that governors can consider to take advantage of the arts as a workforce development strategy and to initiate the spread of successful programs.

- ❑ Include arts education as an element of comprehensive education reform legislation.
- ❑ Facilitate the interaction among governors' education policy advisors, economic development leaders, and school leadership—especially in those areas with high numbers of at-risk youth. A state's top arts and culture officers can act as resources in these interactions.
- ❑ Encourage artists to participate in community development programs including artist-in-residence programs, assistance to youth in primary and secondary schools, neighborhood centers and programs, and detention centers.
- ❑ Leverage the willingness of the private sector to contribute to the arts by providing seed funding and starter grants to innovative arts-based education programs.
- ❑ Insist that legislation promoting the arts in education be subject to ongoing outcome measurement, and consult with national organizations and centers of excellence to determine best practices in program evaluation.
- ❑ Facilitate collaboration between arts educators and juvenile detention centers to promote programs for detained youth.

At the national level, states can also participate in, and benefit from, the creation of a centralized, easily accessible database listing arts-based programs that includes replicable components, best practices information on a state-by-state basis, outcomes measurement, and relevant contact information.

Conclusion

In a human capital-based, knowledge economy, the loss of workforce productivity is tantamount to throwing money away. In this environment, states do not have the option of excluding at-risk or incarcerated youth populations from the workforce. In the face of such developments as a shrinking workforce, increased globalization, and an aging population, governors can continue to explore methods that guarantee higher levels of productivity and financial viability for their states. Diverse arts education programs—in and out of school curricula—have proven to be valuable options for states seeking to develop advanced workforce skills for general, at-risk, and incarcerated students. With the help of the arts, governors can ensure that skills are developed effectively, completely, and to the best advantage of the states and their constituencies.

Endnotes

- ¹ Thanks to a cooperative agreement between the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, and with significant research assistance from the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, this is the second of three *Issue Briefs* in that explores effective practices that integrate economic development and the arts. See "Issue Brief: The Role of the Arts in Economic Development" (June 25, 2001).
- ² "Building Skills for the New Economy," Policy Report, Progressive Policy Institute, April 2001.
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