

Building Our Creative Capital Through the Arts

To remain competitive in the global economy, America needs to reinvigorate the kind of creativity and innovation that has made this country great. To do so, we must nourish our children's creative skills. In addition to giving our children the science and math skills they need to compete in the new global context, we should also encourage the ability to think creatively that comes from a meaningful arts education.

--- President Barack Obama

College Board Congressional Briefing: The Impact of the Arts
on College and Career Readiness

April 8, 2011, 10:00 am

Room 430 Dirksen Senate Office Building

By Dennie Palmer Wolf, WolfBrown

Overview

- A New Frame for Arts Education: Creative Capital
- The Arts as an Engine for Building Creative Capital
- What to Do: Design Principles for Challenging Times

**BUILDING
CREATIVE
CAPITAL**





Creative Capital

A New Frame for Arts Education

In Building College, Career, and Life Readiness

Creative Capital

The capacity to imagine and make the world over by inventing the works, strategies, and conditions which make it possible for individuals, families, and communities to thrive. It includes:

- Solar-powered pumps that produce clean water
- Micro-finance for rural entrepreneurs
- The gospel songs of the Civil Rights movement
- The poetry people shared in Tahrir Square
- Home and landscape design that are replacing anonymous public housing towers in urban centers, building safety, health, and community.

**BUILDING
CREATIVE
CAPITAL**



Four New Understandings about Creative Capital

- The capacity is widespread, not rare
- Depends on opportunity, not raw gift
- Demands apprenticeship, not just exposure
- Flourishes among, not within, people



The Arts as an Engine for Building Creative Capital

- Conditions for Achievement
- Schools for Leadership and Responsibility
 - Engines of Equity
- Sources of Community Strength

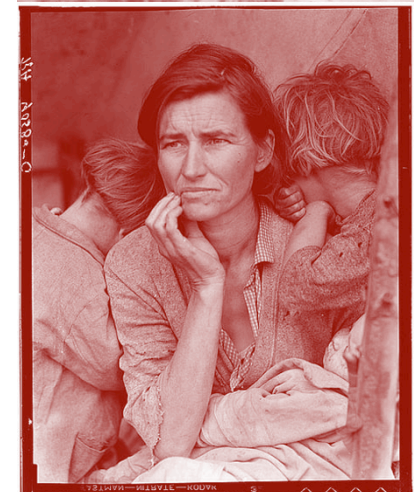
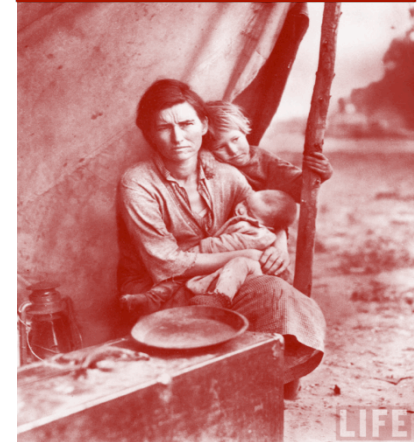
What is the evidence?

What do we still need to know?

Arts Engagement is a Condition for Achievement

- *To think about: Dorothea Lange's 6 wholly different compositions before selecting the final frame for "Migrant Mother."*
- *Evidence*
 - Higher rates of school attendance for young people involved in the arts
 - Greater academic success for students who are seriously engaged in the arts
 - Higher rates of high school graduation in urban high schools with more arts learning.

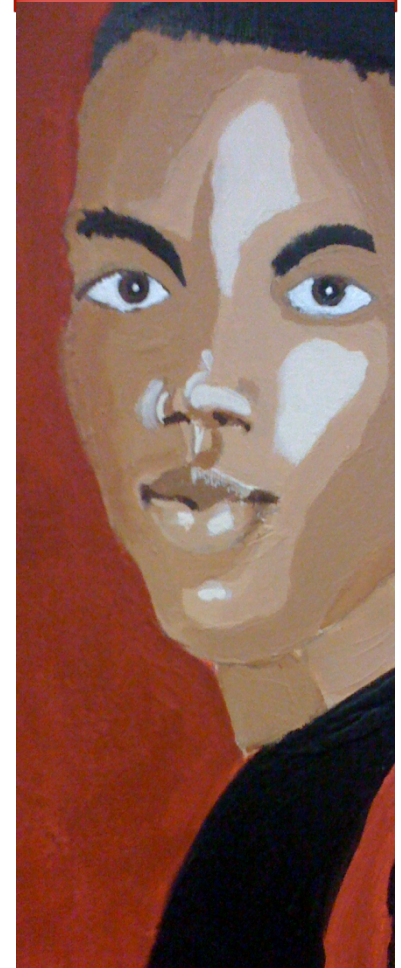
BUILDING
CREATIVE
CAPITAL



Arts Engagement is an Engine of Equity

- *To think about: Benny Goodman's radio band was integrated a decade before Jackie Robinson joined the major leagues.*
- *Evidence*
 - Higher levels of academic success in particular for disadvantaged students who engage in the arts
 - Increased out-of-school learning opportunities for under-served youth who become members of youth ensembles (e.g., sustained mentoring, interaction with adult role models, travel, etc.)

BUILDING
CREATIVE
CAPITAL



Arts Engagement is a School for Leadership and Responsibility

- *To think about: Walt Whitman tending Civil War wounded; the numbers of contemporary artists who work and volunteer in hospitals, shelters, and schools.*
- Evidence
 - Community arts programs where young people have significant roles foster young people's leadership skills and strategic thinking
 - Arts projects in juvenile justice settings encourage the development of constructive and supportive peer-to-peer interactions

BUILDING
CREATIVE
CAPITAL



Arts Engagement as a Source of Community Strength and Inclusiveness

- *To think about: While interned in WWII, many Japanese-Americans practiced the art of “gaman,” surviving hardship by crafting objects of beauty from whatever came to hand.*

- *Evidence*

In neighborhoods with more arts and cultural institutions and opportunities, there is greater:

- Racial, cultural, and economic integration
- Co-existence of original customs and heritage along with emerging identities and practices among new Americans
- Likelihood of revitalization and decreased poverty

**BUILDING
CREATIVE
CAPITAL**



Design Principles for Hard Times

- Job loss affecting family budgets
- Fiscal austerity at state and local levels
- Growing accountability for student performance in “core” subjects
 - Resulting cuts to arts programs

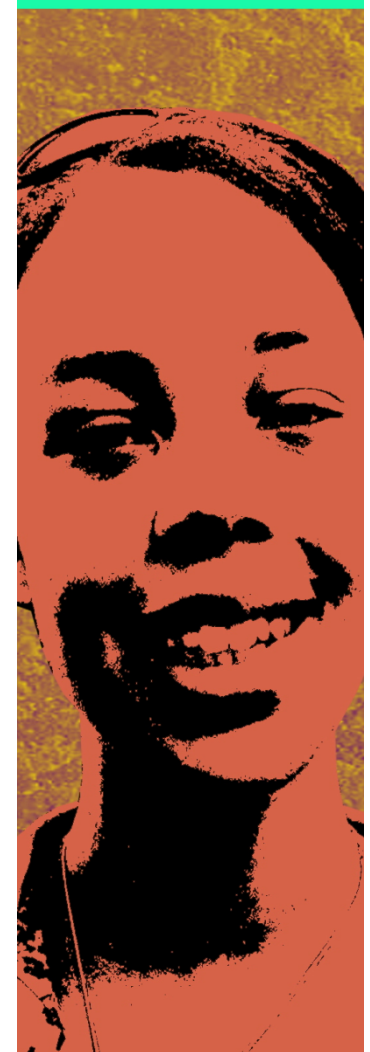
What can we do?

Ensuring arts education is a part of the solution

Design Principles for Hard Times

- ESEA: Re-define a high-standards/effective school as one that offers well-rounded education
- Define well-rounded as including regular instruction in at least one art form across the grades
- Require standardized data collection on arts instruction (Fast Response Survey System)
- Fund NAEP assessment of arts skills at 4, 8, and 12, every 5 years
- Include the arts in Title I provisions
- Career and vocational education legislation that stresses innovation and includes arts as a major strategy

BUILDING
CREATIVE
CAPITAL



Key Actions Outside of Education

BUILDING
CREATIVE
CAPITAL

- Build into job training legislation
- Build into public housing: Require construction to include spaces to support creative activities
- Build into health legislation: Cross-generational dance and theater as motivating physical activity as a family habit



THIS ABSOLUTELY MATTERS.

“We are each other's harvest;
we are each other's business;
we are each other's magnitude
and bond.”

--Gwendolyn Brooks in her
poem “Paul Robeson”

