



PRESIDENT ELECT'S MESSAGE

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The Arts Make the Difference

The arts are a treasured part of American culture and education. They are key indicators of the health of a school and are an important factor in healthy communities and cities. When the arts thrive, there is, in the words of Carol Colletta, President and CEO of CEOs for Cities, a “felt vibrancy” that can be sensed immediately. It is an attractive force drawing creative individuals who work synergistically to create a vital community. I visit many schools and, like you, I can feel the pulse of the arts in schools when they are highly valued. Even Chicago’s Mayor Richard Daley once commented that he is able to recognize a quality school by the quality of its music program.

Do the arts make a difference in terms of their economic impact? A 2005 study sponsored by Americans for the Arts, our nation’s leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America, asked this question about the nonprofit arts industry, and they found that nonprofit arts and cultural institutions generate:

- \$166.2 billion in economic activity annually.
- 5.7 million full-time equivalent jobs.
- \$104.2 in household income.
- \$29.6 billion annually in federal, state or local tax revenue.

Arts & Economic Prosperity III, 2005.
Published by Americans for the Arts.

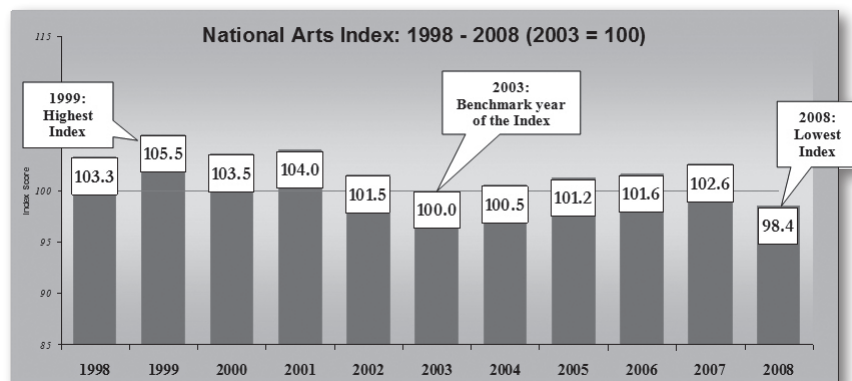
Download the complete report from <http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/EconomicImpact>

By any measure, an industry that generates this much economic impact—more than the total GDP of some countries—nearly all of it in local communities, makes a difference.

But the status and the character of the arts are in flux. The health of the arts has declined, and the manner in which the arts are experienced is changing. To better understand and monitor these fluctuations, Americans for the Arts created a new National Arts Index: “The National Arts Index is a highly distilled annual measure of the health and vitality of arts in the United States by using 76 equal weighted, national-level indicators of arts activity.”

(http://www.americansforthearts.org/information_services/arts_index/001.asp)
(The chart below and all statistics pertaining to the Arts Index are taken from this site.)

What does the Index tell us and of what use is it to us in our educational and advocacy endeavors? The Index gives a single numerical rating to the health of the arts that can be used comparatively over the span of the scale. The indicators were all calibrated to 100 in 2003, so one can see how the arts have risen and fallen over the past decade. We see that we are currently (in 2008) down 4.2% from 2007, and down 7.1% from its highest point in 1999. It’s also easy to see that the status of the arts follows the general status of the economic health of the nation.



The indicators used to create the Index are also clustered to show general trends and changes within certain sectors of the arts and see more precisely what's up and what's down

What's Up?

Even though the Index as a whole has fallen, the following are rising:

- The number of artists. The number of people personally creating art is growing faster than the population rate.
- The number of arts organizations.
- Culturally and ethnically specific arts organizations. These are growing faster than the minority population.
- The percentage (20%) of SAT test takers who have completed four years of arts education.
- Individuals obtaining arts degrees.
- New work presented in theater, opera, Broadway, and film.
- Alternative delivery systems, e.g., simulcast performances of opera on large screens erected in parks and baseball fields; opportunities to tap into backstage directions during live performances via headphone; programs for adults.

One of the more salient observations of the Index is that engagement in the arts within the nation is increasing in a way that appears to correlate with the increased growth in the population of individuals over 65. In fact, there are more Americans over 65 than under 25, a fact that should give us some pause. As baby boomers retire, are they picking up the arts again? This segment of the population is also the most likely to vote. If they are engaged in the arts within the local school and community, perhaps they will be more likely to say yes when asked to approve a tax increase to fund the continuance of the school music program, along with all the other arts.

What's Down?

It is no surprise that there is a downside to the status of the arts right now. Here are the items noted in the report:

- Contributions to the arts from foundations and corporations were down 4.2% and 5.7% respectively before the current recession. They continue to fall.
- Although participation in the arts is increasing, the percentage of the population engaged in the arts is decreasing. This is true even within the popular music sector.
- 50% of music and CD stores have disappeared in the past 5 years.

Final Thoughts

The arts make a difference. This is abundantly clear from the data. The economic impact of the arts is surprisingly large. Community (and school) vitality is enhanced with the arts. Interest in advanced degrees in the arts is higher than ever, as is the population of individuals who engage in the arts on a personal level. Perhaps a question music educators should ponder is how to tap community interest in artistic engagement. About 75% of households within our taxpaying communities do not have school aged children. How can we reach this population?

Comments or Thoughts?

I am always interested in hearing music educators' thoughts on the topics addressed in this column. Please feel free to e-mail me at rosenthal@vandercook.edu.

On Another Note

I join many others in bidding a fond farewell to Randy and Linda Kummer. Their soulful caring for the IMEA and their commitment to quality living with and through music is inspiring. They have made a hugely positive difference for the IMEA and all who know them. It is an honor and privilege to have worked with both of them.

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