



ARTSERVE

2009 Arts Education
Action Toolkit





November 6, 2009

Dear Advocate:

Thank you for your interest in advocating for arts education in the state of Michigan.

As you know, Michigan's schools are facing significant budget cuts in the current fiscal year with districts looking at a decrease of at least \$292 in per pupil funding. In the coming months, districts will be forced to make challenging decisions based on reduced budget figures – decreasing funding to some programs while dismissing others.

In September, ArtServe announced that we had received a grant from the Kennedy Center National Partnerships to develop a new Arts Education Advocacy Toolkit in 2010. However, given the current challenges we are facing in per pupil funding cuts, we have decided to address the immediate situation by producing the Arts Education Action Toolkit.

While we will continue to produce a complete Arts Education Advocacy Toolkit available for distribution in 2010, we feel that addressing the current issues we are facing is more than prudent. This kit includes tools that will aid in your efforts to preempt funding cuts to arts education as well as provide reactionary assistance when cuts are being considered in your district.

Remember, effective arts education advocacy hinges on us continuously providing information about the impact of arts education on student achievement and success to parents, legislators, school officials, and the public. It's up to you to preserve arts education in your schools!

As always, please feel free to call or email Mike Latvis, ArtServe Michigan's Director of Public Policy at 248-379-5897 or mike@artservemichigan.org

Sincerely,

Jennifer H. Goulet, President
ArtServe Michigan

Mike Latvis, Director of Public Policy
ArtServe Michigan

What can I do to help avoid cuts to arts education in my district?

Keep Us Informed In order to best position our advocacy efforts and messaging we need to know what is going on in your district. Whether it is status quo or a rumor we want to hear from you! Send a brief or detailed email to mike@artserveMichigan.org to ensure that ArtServe stays informed.

Communicate the Issue The best way to prevent a cut to your district or school arts education programs is to communicate with your district and school administrators, parent teacher association and the school board. A simple email, letter or phone call to each of the above detailing the importance of the education of the 'whole child' as well as why arts education is important to you will go a long way. Remember, it isn't always about the data or dollar figure that can sway a decision.

Find the Right People The best way to find the appropriate contact information for the decision makers in your area is to do a little research. Take a minute to search the school district's website or call the district administrative office to obtain the correct information. In the end, if you need help finding the right people to contact don't hesitate to contact ArtServe for guidance.

Delivering the Right Message We have taken the liberty of preparing a draft letter that you can use to send to the decision makers in your area. Simply insert your contact information as well as your story detailing why a quality arts education is important to you and send. Feel free to use our draft letter or use your own words, because at the end of the day you know best how arts education affects your child, city, business, etc.

Get Involved Consider regularly attending school board meetings or at least paying attention to what's on the agenda for each meeting. Additionally, consider getting involved in your PTA or at least foster relationships with those who lead the group.

~~~~~ DRAFT ~~~~~

November 2, 2009

Honorable Joe Smith  
President, City of Tomorrow School Board  
1 Clover Court  
Wixom, MI 48393

Dear School Board President Smith:

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you of my support for and the importance of providing a quality arts education for [our students, my child, etc.] in the [enter school district or school].

As a voter and [parent, teacher, student, concerned citizen] I strongly believe that a quality arts education curriculum, combined with the other core subject areas will best prepare our children for the future. As we continue to take steps at every level to revitalize Michigan's economy, it is crucial that we are able to produce a knowledge base that is equip with creative skills that will help fuel innovation in today's competitive and evolving workforce.

[If possible, include a story as to why arts education is important to you.]

I bring to your attention comments made a few months ago by Arne Duncan, the United States Secretary of Education. He spoke of his recognition of and the need for a quality arts education. Secretary Duncan writes, "I was reminded of the important role that arts education plays in providing American students with a well-rounded education. The arts can help students become tenacious, team-oriented problem solvers who are confident and able to think creatively. These qualities can be especially important in improving learning among students from economically disadvantaged circumstances."

While you may be forced to consider budget and program reductions in the coming months, I'd like for you to keep in mind the words of Secretary Duncan and consider the consequences of not providing a quality arts education to Michigan's future workforce.

I thank you for your time and would welcome the opportunity to speak with you regarding the importance of arts education as well as any questions or comments that you may have.

Sincerely,

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## Reactionary Advocacy - How to react when cuts are announced

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When cuts to arts education programming or teachers land on the agenda of your school board you need to act fast to organize your community. Your first step in fighting cuts is to gather some basic information and contact ArtServe.

We have developed a system that does all of the organizing for you! All we need is some basic information regarding the nature of the cut or issue and the action you would like to take.

### **Local Arts Action Network (LAAN)**

In an effort to expand our range of advocacy and bring you up to speed on the local issues that affect you, we are now providing ArtServe's constituents with access to the **Local Arts Action Network**. This service is aimed at connecting YOU with other arts and culture supporters in your community.

If there is an upcoming vote, hearing or meeting in your area for which you would like to mobilize a group to join you in making your voices heard and/or in taking a specific action, we can help by using the **Local Arts Action Network** to spread the word throughout your local area, inviting fellow advocates to contact you.

Our new **Local Arts Action Network** is a local community-activated alert system, which means that you as a local arts advocate need to e-mail ArtServe Michigan at [mike@artservemichigan.org](mailto:mike@artservemichigan.org) with the information listed below in order to prompt an alert.

1. Your name and contact information (e-mail, phone, fax, snail mail address)
2. If known, include the name of your district's fine arts coordinator
3. Brief description of the issue
4. Name of group discussing, taking up or voting on the issue (i.e., city council members, county commission, school board, chamber of commerce)
5. Name of city or county affected by the issue
6. Meeting date/time/location
7. Action you are requesting of fellow advocates (i.e., attend, sign a petition, call or write local elected officials, media, etc.)

Once ArtServe Michigan is notified, an e-mail will be sent to subscribers of the Public Policy E-Alerts who live in your city (or county if it is a countywide issue), passing along the above info provided by you and inviting them to contact you if they want to get involved. This also serves as a way that ArtServe can help you build and strengthen your local lines of communication among arts advocates.

**To ensure the privacy of all subscribers of the Public Policy E-Alerts, we will blind carbon copy (BCC) every member who would be included in the Local Arts Action Network list. The e-mail will look like it came from Mike Latvis and will only contain the requester's contact information, making the LAAN an optional service.**

## Tips for Speaking With Elected Officials

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**Know the facts.** In the pages that follow, you will find everything that ArtServe staff members use when speaking to legislators on pieces of legislation. Take a moment to read over the documents that explain what we are advocating for and how the passage of each bill will benefit Michigan, its people and its communities.

**Be patient and polite.** It is not unusual for a legislator to run late between the day's meetings. Be patient and polite; the legislator's staff will advise you on when he or she will arrive.

**Don't back down.** It is likely that the representative or senator will challenge you as to why such legislation will help the state of Michigan. Don't retreat from the issues—stick to the talking points! More often than not, legislators don't know all the issues and will ask questions. This is your opportunity to inform them of our issues.

**Let them know who you are.** Make sure you let your legislators know that you reside in their district, as they will be more responsive if they know they are speaking to constituents. Be sure to point out that voters in their district support this legislation and so should they.

**Make it personal!** Legislators are more responsive when you attach the human factor to the issue. Tell stories about how arts funding and state grants have benefited the people and communities in the legislator's district. We have included a list of grants that have been awarded in your legislative district, so be sure to point them out.

**Say "Thank you!"** At the end of your meeting, be sure to thank the legislator for his or her time and remember to provide a copy of the group's thank-you letter before you leave.

**Let this be the beginning of a relationship with your legislators.** When you get home, send your legislators a note thanking them for their time. Add them to our mailing lists and invite them to local arts events, openings and other activities that they or their families might enjoy. [Be a resource to your legislators.](#) If any of them express interest in obtaining information on a certain arts issue or organization, send it. Let ArtServe know if you need help.

## Talking Points

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- ✓ Arts education promotes creative problem solving and strengthens the ability to work with others; all of which provide an invaluable link from Arts Education to the workforce.
- ✓ Arts education provides a way to nurture the next generation of arts and culture patrons/audiences and employees, which feeds into providing our cities with a greater quality of life.
- ✓ Supporting arts education helps keep at-risk students in school, providing them with the creative instruction they require to graduate and move on to the next level of education.
- ✓ Arts education nurtures the imagination that fuels innovation in today's competitive workforce.
- ✓ Arts education exposes students to a broad range of perspectives giving them the ability to work with people who are different from themselves.
- ✓ A poll conducted by Harris Interactive, reports that 93% of Americans believe the arts are vital to providing a well-rounded education.
- ✓ According to the same Harris Interactive poll, 75% of Americans agree that incorporating the arts into education is the first step in adding back what is missing in public education today.
- ✓ Arts education increases student's self-esteem by encouraging students to take risks and to be different by thinking creatively.