



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Proceedings Report*

# Examining the Intersection of Arts Education and Special Education: *A National Forum*

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts  
July 26-27, 2012

**vsa** The International  
Organization on  
Arts and Disability

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and  
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Special appreciation to Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith  
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Proceeding Report  
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The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts has been involved for decades in unlocking doors to arts learning for millions of young people, families, and teachers. With its affiliate VSA, the Kennedy Center has been at the forefront of making arts education accessible to students with disabilities.

Recognizing the need to re-examine the changing demands and challenges of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for students with disabilities, the Kennedy Center and VSA invited a dynamic group of “thought leaders” to the Kennedy Center to explore the intersection of the separate but allied fields of arts education and special education and to make recommendations for a new national agenda that would result in the arts becoming an essential, ongoing part of the education of students with disabilities.

Forty-nine national leaders, representing a range of art forms and expertise, accepted the invitation to meet at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. on July 26--27 2012 and participate in the meeting, *Examining the Intersection of Arts Education and Special Education: A National Forum*.

Their numerous recommendations are organized into two broad recommendations, both of which support access to current knowledge and promote the development of new knowledge that could reshape or refine current understandings, policies, and practices.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1**

#### **CREATE A DYNAMIC INFORMATION HUB/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER**

National Forum participants identified the need for a dynamic information hub that would host, archive, and provide access to a wide range of resources at the intersection of arts education and special education. They agreed that the establishment of an information hub/web site would provide information that would be central to all efforts and identified potential hub users and content.

### **RECOMMENDATION 2**

#### **ESTABLISH A CONSORTIUM OF ARTS EDUCATION AND DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS TO ADVANCE A SHARED NATIONAL AGENDA**

National Forum participants agreed that a stronger national voice and greater impact would be achieved if organizations involved with arts education and special education formed a Consortium to better structure and unify their work. This recommendation includes a subset of four potential consortium activities:

## **2.1 -- FORM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS TO MEET SHARED INTERESTS AND NEEDS**

Recommendations include using the Consortium to facilitate partnerships with national arts and education organizations, the Whole Child initiative, Common Core, teacher preparation and in-service professional development programs, teacher certification and licensure organizations, community-wide arts education planning initiatives, and early intervention programs.

## **2.2 -- CONVENE NATIONAL SYMPOSIA ON CRITICAL TOPICS**

Participants offered three major recommendations for Consortium-hosted symposia:

### **2.2.1 -- Symposia: Research**

The focus would be on setting a new research agenda for long-term research examining how engagement in the arts process impacts every child's development and learning, including students with disabilities.

### **2.2.2 -- Symposia: Professional Development for Educators**

The focus would be on identifying and sharing the current best practices for bringing together the arts and special education in university pre-service teacher education programs and in-service professional development for generalist teachers, arts educators, teacher aides/paraprofessionals, and teaching artists.

### **2.2.3 -- Symposia: Adaptive and Assistive Technology**

The symposia would focus on uses of current adaptive and assistive technology which have the potential to transform learning for students with disabilities.

## **2.3 -- DEVELOP A SERIES OF PROFESSIONAL PAPERS ON KEY ISSUES**

National Forum participants recommended the development and dissemination of a series of professional papers to bring attention to key issues, promising practices, and relevant research at the intersection of arts education and special education.

## **2.4 -- SHAPE POLICIES AND LEAD ADVOCACY INITIATIVES**

### **2.4.1 -- FORMULATE AND PRESENT POLICY REQUESTS TO DECISION MAKERS**

National Forum participants offered a variety of recommendations that would help to advance policy initiatives critical for ensuring arts education for all students, especially for those with disabilities.

### **2.4.2 -- LEAD ADVOCACY EFFORTS**

Forum participants offered a series of recommendations for making advocacy a priority. They felt the Consortium could be a leader in advocacy efforts.



# The Kennedy Center

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