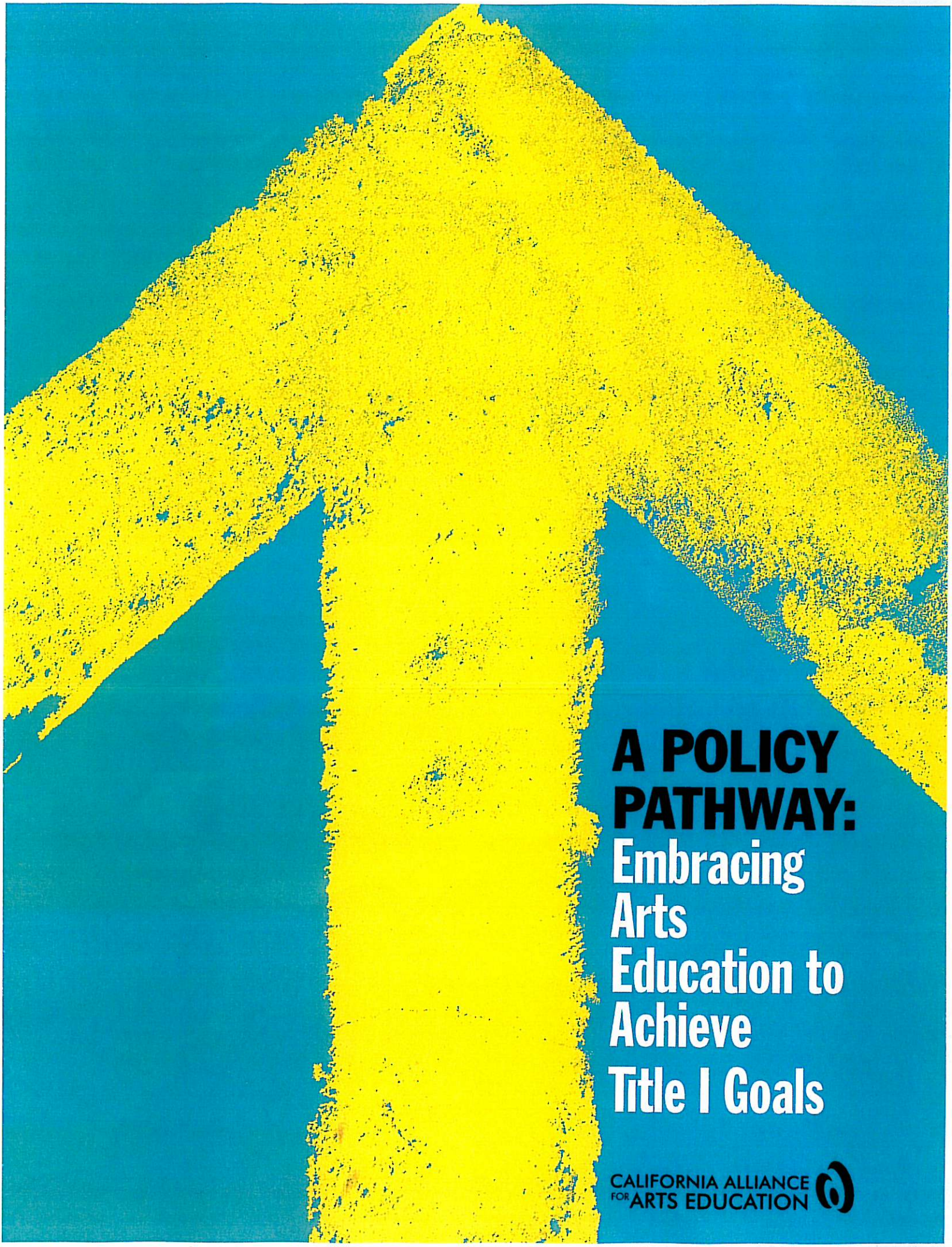
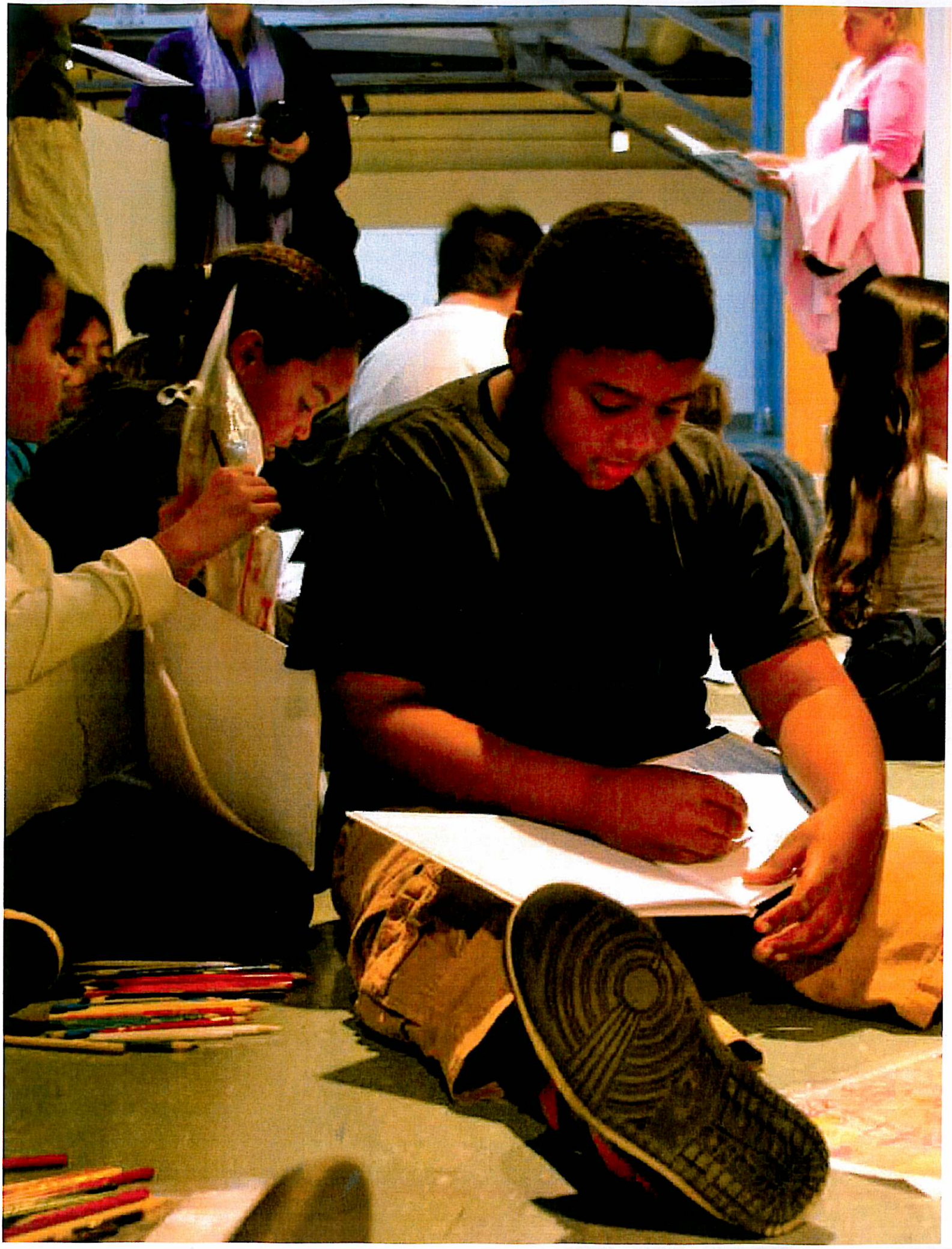


A POLICY PATHWAY: Embracing Arts Education to Achieve Title I Goals

CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE FOR ARTS EDUCATION



ACHIEVING TITLE I GOALS: THE ROLE OF ARTS EDUCATION

How can we improve educational outcomes for low-income students who are often underserved in public schools? This is the challenge to which Title I—a federal funding stream targeting assistance to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds—addresses itself. Schools and districts receiving Title I funds are charged with using these additional resources to supplement their regular education programs, in particular, to support qualifying students' achievement in English Language Arts and mathematics and parent involvement with schools.

A substantial body of research demonstrates that certain forms of arts education can be an asset to schools and districts in achieving these goals.[1] Studies find that integrating the arts with instruction in other academic subjects—for example, teaching skills and content of drama and English Language Arts in tandem—increases student learning and achievement and helps teachers more effectively meet the needs of all students.[2,3] Studies also find that both integrated and non-integrated forms of arts education help to transform the learning environment in schools by fostering student engagement, attendance, and motivation to learn, and improving school culture and climate.[4,5] These outcomes are leading indicators of student achievement. They are also key ingredients for turning around low-performing schools.

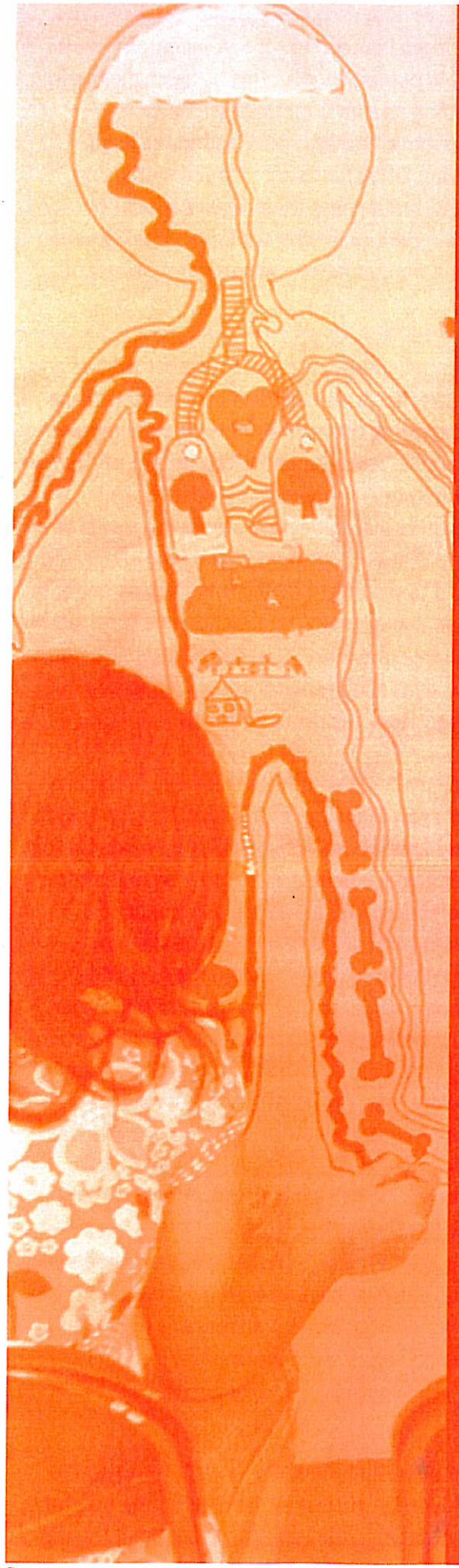
> Arts education remains critical to leveling the playing field of opportunity.
>
> —ARNE DUNCAN, *SECRETARY OF EDUCATION*

In today's policy climate, educational strategies that include the arts may be particularly valuable to advancing the goals of Title I. A majority of states have now signed onto Common Core State Standards that establish a goal for student achievement that not only includes basic skills in literacy and mathematics, but also the development of higher-order thinking skills such as creative and critical thinking and problem solving. Arts integrated English Language Arts and mathematics instruction helps students develop these higher-order skills at the same time as it helps them master basic skills and content knowledge in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. Many Title I students who are below basic proficiency in ELA or mathematics are frequently pulled out of electives—including the arts—where they might otherwise have opportunities to develop higher-order thinking skills. When schools integrate the arts into Title I intervention programs, they can help address this equity gap. As Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, states, "The arts can help students become tenacious, team-oriented problem solvers who are confident and able to think creatively."[6] As a result, "Arts education remains critical to leveling the playing field of opportunity," Duncan says.[7]

THE DEPARTURE POINT: EVIDENCE OF INEQUITY

Despite the evidence demonstrating the ability of arts education to help advance the goals of Title I, a 2011 survey conducted by Arts for All,[8] found that students attending Title I schools in Los Angeles had

[1] ArtsEdSearch (www.artsedsearch.org), a research and policy clearing house from the national Arts Education Partnership.
[2] Podlozny, A. (2000). Strengthening verbal skills through the use of classroom drama: A clear link. Journal of Aesthetic Education, 34(3-4), 239-276.
[3] Ingram, D., & Riedel, E., (2003). Arts for Academic Achievement: What does arts integration do for students? University of Minnesota: Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, College of Education and Human Development.
[4] Walker, E., Tabone, C. & Weltsek, G. (2011). When achievement data meet drama and arts integration. Language Arts, 88(5), 365-372.
[5] Stevenson, L., & Deasy, R. J. (2005). Third space: When learning matters. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership.
[6] Duncan, A. Letter to School and Education Community Leaders, August, 2009.
[7] Duncan, A. (2012). Address to the national Arts Education Partnership forum, Washington, DC.
[8] Waldorf, L., & Atwill, K. (2011). Arts for All school arts survey: Measuring quality, access and equity in arts education. S. Klatzker, (Ed.). Retrieved from http://www.lacountyarts.org/pubfiles/SummaryQAE_SurveyResults_2011.pdf



disproportionately low access to arts education compared to more economically advantaged peers. This finding echoed results of a national survey on arts education conducted by the U.S. Department of Education.[9]

Prompted by this survey and an invitation from Arts for LA, Los Angeles County's leading arts advocacy organization, the California Alliance for Arts Education, a statewide advocacy organization, set out to explore the role that arts education could play in Title I. Our intention was to support schools and districts in embracing the arts among their strategies for achieving Title I goals and realizing the benefits of arts education for students evidenced in arts education research.

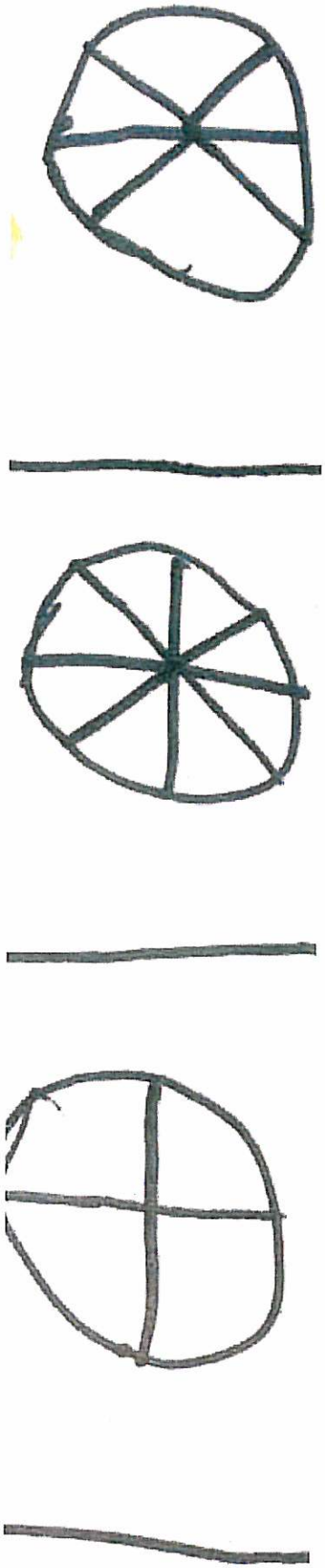
THE LAY OF THE LAND: FEDERAL POLICY AND SCHOOL AND DISTRICT REALITY

Federal Title I policy allows schools and districts to include arts education in their strategies to achieve Title I goals. In fact, both current Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, and former Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, are on record stating that Title I can be used to fund arts education to support the achievement of low-income students.[10]

Downstream of the federal level, however, the Alliance found that there was a lack of clarity about whether and how the arts could play a role in Title I. Coupled with the culture of "fear of reprisal" that seemed to permeate the Title I world—where funding could be retracted if a program didn't meet state or federal expectations—this lack of clarity was preventing schools and districts from including arts education in their Title I strategies, or at least deterring them from doing so publicly. District and school decision makers were wary of making choices that might lead funds to be revoked by state officials for improper use. Similarly, state officials expressed concern that, despite the Secretary of Education's guidance, federal administrators might regard programs including arts education as outside Title I guidelines and revoke state funding. As a result, when we looked for schools and districts in California exemplifying this practice, we found few that would go on record as having funded arts education strategies through Title I. Schools and districts, it seemed, were either electing to ignore the opportunity to include arts education in their strategies for achieving Title I goals, or were moving forward in a way that would draw no attention to those practices.

CHARTING A PATHWAY: FACILITATING CHANGE

It was not clear, when it came to arts education and Title I, to what extent school and district fear of reprisal was based in fact or mythology. Regardless, however, it seemed to be having a real effect constraining the actions of schools and districts. To alleviate this fear,



the Alliance has been working to clarify what we have come to call a policy pathway—a shared understanding aligned across school, district, state, and federal levels of leadership regarding what is allowable when it comes to expending Title I funds on arts education. It is our hope that this pathway will enable any school or district that wishes, to successfully and publicly develop, implement, and evaluate educational strategies that include the arts to achieve Title I goals. The remainder of this paper tells the story of how the Alliance and its partners are using advocacy, research, and partnership to chart this pathway.

CONNECTING THE DOTS: CLARIFYING STATE POLICY IN RELATIONSHIP TO FEDERAL POLICY

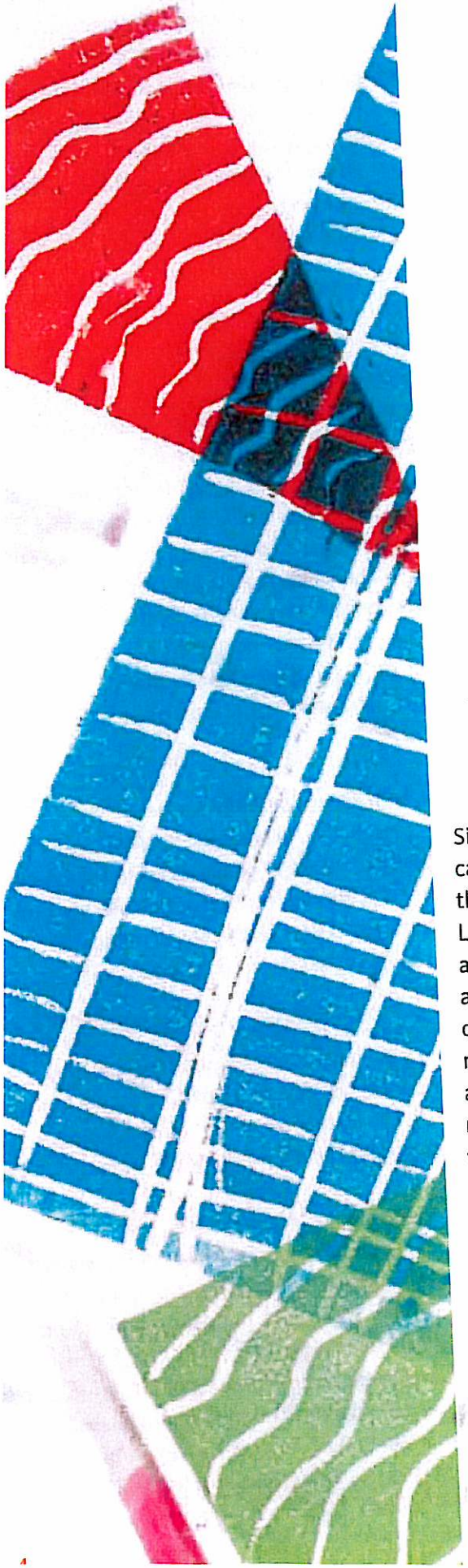
Having confirmed that federal Title I policy supported using Title I funds for, "arts education to improve the achievement of disadvantaged students,"[11] our next step was to seek a clear understanding of the position of the California Department of Education regarding if and how arts education programming could play a role in achieving the goals of Title I. Toward this end, in July 2011, Arts for LA and the Alliance co-authored a letter to California's newly elected Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Torlakson, requesting guidance on this matter. Four additional partners—the California State PTA, the California Arts Council, the Los Angeles Music Center, and Arts for All—signed the letter.

Simultaneously, in order to help draw the California Department of Education's attention to this issue, the Alliance and Arts for LA co-authored an op-ed in the Silicon Valley Foundation's online education newsletter [see page 10]. We also sent out an action alert to our constituents, resulting in over 400 letters to the Superintendent's office from around the state requesting clarification on the role arts education could play in Title I.

In June 2012, the Department of Education responded with a letter to districts from Deputy Superintendent Deb Sigman, outlining the parameters for using Title I funds to support arts programming that achieves Title I goals [see page 11 for the complete letter]. Sigman wrote:

> Under the federal ESEA [Elementary and Secondary Education Act], local education agencies have the flexibility within certain programs to use federal funds to support the arts. However, funds may not be used to fund programs whose primary objective is arts education. These funds may be used only in limited circumstances to fund aspects of arts education if the strategies have been demonstrated to improve student academic achievement in English language arts and/or mathematics. In order to use Title I, Part A funds, a Title I school's School Site Council (SSC) must develop, review,

[9] Parsad, B., & Spiegelman, M., 2012. Arts education in public elementary and secondary schools 1999-2000 and 2009-10. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
[10] Arne Duncan, Letter to School and Education Community Leaders, August, 2009. Rod Paige, Letter to Superintendents, July 2004.
[11] Arne Duncan, Letter to School and Education Community Leaders, August, 2009.



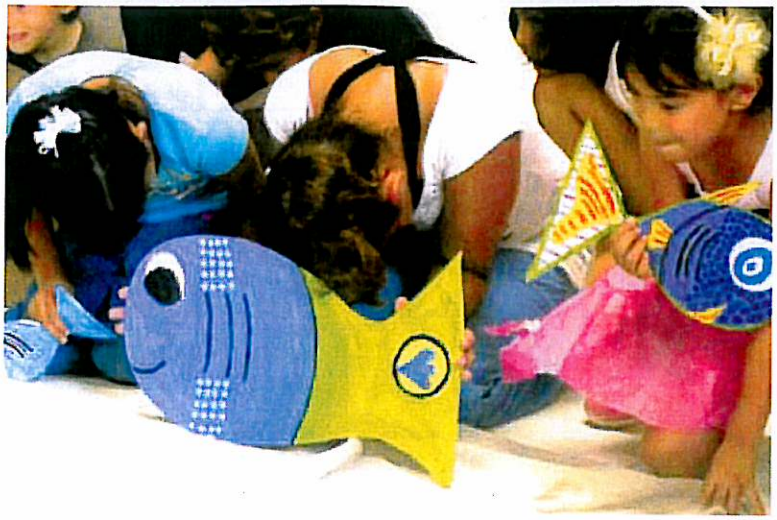
update, and approve the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA), which then must be approved by the local governing board. Any LEA [Local Education Agency] seeking to use funds for this purpose must comply with the requirements governing the development and approval of the SPSA.

Title I funding might be appropriately used to support arts education as a strategy to improve student achievement in ELA [English Language Arts] and mathematics at a Title I school if, after conducting a comprehensive needs assessment, the school has identified research-based strategies or programs incorporating arts instruction to improve the academic achievement in ELA and mathematics for participating students...

Superintendent Torlakson believes strongly that children should receive a holistic education that includes activities that reinforce academics, develop skills, capture student interest, and support student engagement. Arts education can play an important role in this regard.

Sigman's letter clarified that indeed, in California, schools and districts can use Title I funds to support educational strategies that include the arts, if these strategies improve student achievement in English Language Arts and/or mathematics. The goal of Title I is student achievement in these subjects, and programs must be principally about achieving this goal in order to qualify for Title I funding. This does not detract from the importance of arts education programs whose primary goal is to teach students the arts; it just means that those programs are not a fit for Title I funding and so must be funded through other means. Sigman's letter also stated the procedures schools and districts would need to follow in planning, implementing, and evaluating Title I programs that include the arts.

In order to confirm that the guidance from the California Department of Education aligned with federal guidance, the Alliance's Executive Director, Joe Landon, took Deb Sigman's letter to Washington, D.C., where he met with Paul S. (Sandy) Brown, Acting Director, Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs, at the U.S. Department of Education. Brown reviewed the guidance language provided by the California Department of Education, and gave assurance that its interpretation of Title I requirements is consistent with that of the U.S. Department of Education.



THE LAST LEG: ALIGNING SCHOOL AND DISTRICT PRACTICE WITH STATE AND FEDERAL GUIDANCE

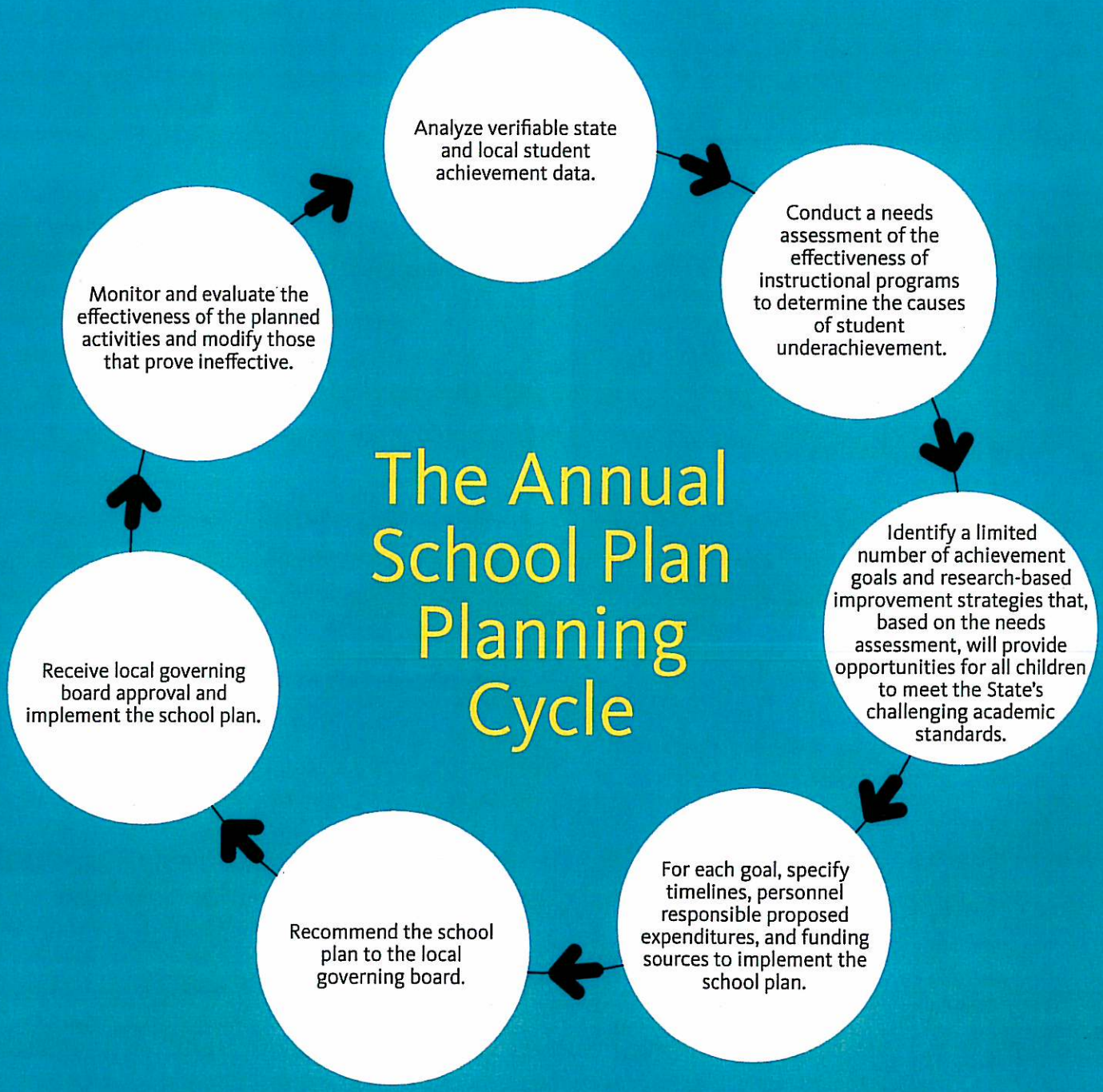
The challenge then remained to determine how schools and districts wishing to embrace the arts to achieve Title I goals could ensure that their practice aligned with state and federal guidance. In September 2012, the Alliance met with Christine Swenson, Director of Improvement & Accountability, and staff at the California Department of Education to clarify what schools and districts would need to know and do in this regard.

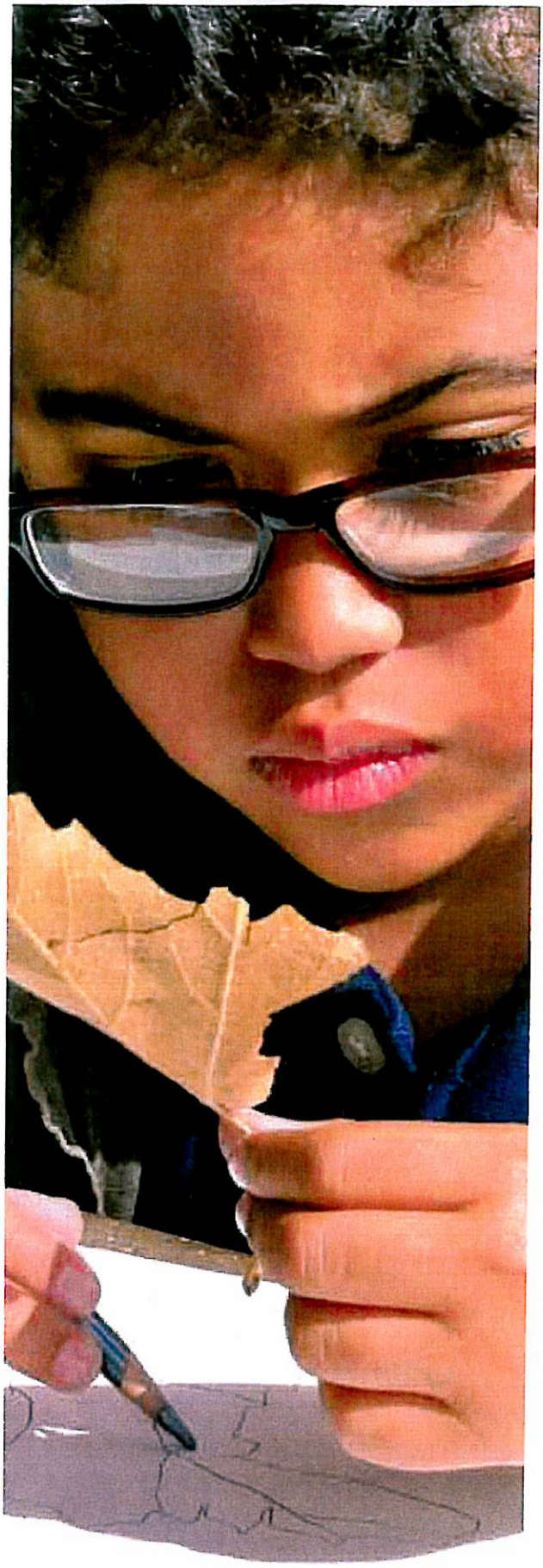
First, she reiterated, in order to be allowable, any educational strategies involving the arts—like all strategies funded through Title I—would need to target student achievement in English Language Arts and/or mathematics. Further, schools and districts would need to develop, implement, and evaluate such strategies within a required planning and evaluation process designed to ensure that Title I programs respond meaningfully and effectively to student needs. This process is outlined in the U.S. Department of Education's non-regulatory guidance for *Designing Schoolwide Programs.*[12] Swenson shared with us a graphic distilling the key steps of the process, developed to provide technical assistance and support to California schools and districts [see page six].

The process begins with an evaluation of student achievement data and a needs assessment to determine the causes of student underachievement. From here, schools and districts must select a set of research-based programs to address the identified causes of underachievement, develop a plan for implementing the programs, and secure approval from the appropriate school and district governing bodies. In the case of schoolwide Title I programs, the school site council would need to support and approve the proposed programs and related expenditures. Finally, after securing approval for the program, a school or district would need to implement the program, evaluate its impact on student achievement at the close of the school year, and make any needed adjustments to the program for the subsequent year.

[12] United States Department of Education. (2006). Designing schoolwide programs. Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/designingswpguid.doc

The Annual School Plan Planning Cycle





USING A COMPASS: THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

A lynchpin in the process of planning a schoolwide program is that the educational strategies that schools and districts select must be research-based. When we met with Christine Swenson and staff at the California Department of Education, we shared with them a clearinghouse of arts education research, ArtsEdSearch (www.artsedsearch.org), created by the national Arts Education Partnership. The clearinghouse includes close to 200 studies that examine the impact of certain forms of arts programming on student achievement in English Language Arts and mathematics, as well as their impact on leading indicators of student success, including student engagement and attendance, teacher efficacy, and school climate and culture. The studies included in ArtsEdSearch have been vetted against a set of criteria for research excellence developed in collaboration with the American Educational Research Association. Swenson concurred that the sound use of this resource could help schools and districts identify research-based programs in which the arts contribute to advancing student achievement and to addressing specific causes of student underachievement identified in their needs assessments.

COMMUNICATION: BUILDING AWARENESS AT THE SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEVEL

The Alliance then turned its attention to the question of how best to communicate this information with schools and districts throughout the vast state. In conversation with the California Department of Education, we learned that their role as administrator of Title I funds prevents them from promoting any particular learning strategy. They do not wish to risk recommendations being construed as mandates and potentially interfering with the decision making of communities and local education leaders. Instead, the California Department of Education invited the Alliance to moderate a panel at the 2012 California Title I conference. The purpose of the panel would be to inform school and district representatives of the opportunity to use Title I funds to implement research-based arts education programs that achieve Title I goals.

The panel was designed to convey the department's guidelines for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of such programs, as well as the perspectives of another state (Arizona) where arts education strategies had been successfully implemented within Title I funding, an assistant superintendent of a school district with a large population of Title I schools and a strong commitment to arts education, a principal of a Title I school where the arts contributed to parent engagement, and a researcher prepared to share the research base connecting arts education with Title I goals.[13]

[13] Panelists included: Christine Swenson, Director of Improvement & Accountability; Lynn Tuttle, Director of Arts Education, Arizona Department of Education; Herman Mendez, Assistant Superintendent, Santa Ana Unified School District; Steve Venz, Principal, Quincy Jones Elementary School, Los Angeles Unified School District; Lauren Stevenson, Arts and Education Consultant and Researcher, Junction Box Consulting.

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GETTING RUBBER ON THE ROAD: SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EXEMPLARS

We have now begun working with a cohort of schools and districts across the state that wish to embrace appropriate forms of arts programming among their strategies for achieving Title I goals. It is our intention to support these schools and districts as they align their practice with state and federal policy requirements and to assist them in getting any additional clarity they might need about these requirements. It is our hope that these schools and districts will serve as exemplars of how arts education can contribute to achieving the goals of Title I.

As we work with the cohort of exemplar schools and districts, we will also be assessing the information and resources that they need as they develop, implement, and evaluate arts education strategies to achieve Title I goals. Based on this information, we plan to build an online system of resources where the cohort and other schools and districts will be able to find needed guidance and support. This system may include, for example, resources to help schools align research-based arts education strategies with specific school site goals and identify means of evaluating the impact of those strategies when they are implemented. We intend to design the system with sufficient flexibility that it may also be useful to other states.

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

As we have pursued this "policy pathway," our efforts have relied upon the resources of advocacy, research, and policy guidance to broaden understanding and build consensus around why this issue matters and how we can bring about change. Advocacy without clear policy goals or the "ask," can be a squandered opportunity. Recommendations for policy change are more easily ignored by decision makers without the active engagement of public voices advocating for change. And research, without the application of advocacy and public policy, too often finds itself removed from the system it seeks to remedy.

Partnership has also been a critical factor in charting this pathway. At various points on this journey, different organizations have stepped forward, providing expertise and leadership relevant to where the conversation needs to go next. As we move forward, we anticipate that others will join in this effort, bringing their voices to the conversation at the local, state, and federal levels. In particular, we expect that parents—who play a critical role at the school site level, where site plans are approved—will be key partners in shaping the role of arts education in Title I programs. As we gain clarity about the appropriate role of arts education in Title I, we envision parents stepping forward to advocate for the role the arts can play in supporting student achievement and engagement. We will be developing resources to support parents in these efforts.

To date, we are working with schools in Los Angeles, Orange, Sacramento, and San Diego counties. We will issue a follow-up report to this document in the next 18 months, highlighting their paths and other developments at local, state, and federal levels. As more schools embrace the appropriate use of arts education strategies to achieve Title I goals, and as we develop the means to provide schools and districts with the guidance necessary to develop those strategies, our hope is that this policy pathway will evolve into the natural landscape of Title I programs and strategies, supporting all students in achieving success

STATE LEADERS SHOULD EMBRACE WHAT TITLE I PERMITS: ARTS FUNDING

Posted on 3/27/12 Silicon Valley Education Foundation

By Joe Landon and Danielle Brazell

The status quo is "stalemate." The intention of the federal Title I program is to improve the academic achievement of children in schools with the highest percentages of children from low-income families. That improvement is measured by improvement in English language arts (ELA) and math.

According to the guidance provided by the California Department of Education, a school may elect to use arts education strategies to improve student achievement "if, after conducting a comprehensive needs assessment, the school has identified research-based strategies or programs incorporating arts instruction to improve the achievement for students in ELA or math for participating students."

But that's not what happens ...

For the most part, school districts elect either to ignore the opportunities that arts education provide to reach students in transformative ways, or they provide those services "under the radar," allowing students to benefit from those strategies, but choosing not to draw attention to those services.

Arts education fosters creativity, innovation, critical thinking, and teamwork – skills students will need to participate in a 21st century workforce. Employed effectively, arts education advances language acquisition and strengthens language arts and math comprehension.

In 2009, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan wrote, "Title I, Part A of ESEA funds arts education to improve the achievement of disadvantaged students."

Unfortunately, in California and in all but a handful of states, that message is not getting through. States are reluctant to incur the wrath of federal oversight that could jeopardize funding, concerned that even though the Secretary may support this practice, those overseeing the federal program don't share his interpretation of the law.

And in California, school districts are reluctant to implement arts strategies for Title I that may run afoul of state interpretation. As a result, the very children who might most benefit from arts education as a resource to improve their academic achievement never get close to those resources.

The best way to replace the existing climate of "fear of reprisal" is with strong, decisive leadership. That's what happened in Arizona, where Superintendent Tom Horne directed $4 million of Title I funding to support arts education at 43 schools throughout the state. In 2004-05, the first year of Title I-F funded arts integration programs across the state, the Arizona Department of Education found statistically significant gains in reading for students participating in arts integration programs funded across the state versus students not participating.

Last year the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities released a report, "Reinvesting in Arts Education – Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools." It said, "PCAH believes that local decision makers need to hear clear, direct, and focused statements from the leaders of federal and state education agencies about how the arts fit within current education priorities."

The time has come to move beyond the "status quo." We call on Superintendent Tom Torlakson to work in partnership with a diverse mix of school districts to demonstrate how Title I can be utilized to support student achievement through the arts.

California's children deserve to know what's right about arts education.

Joe Landon is the Executive Director of the California Alliance for Arts Education, a nonprofit organization that advances visual and performing arts education in K-12 public schools. Prior to joining the Alliance staff, Landon worked in the Capitol as a senior consultant for Speaker Robert Hertzberg and Assemblywoman Wilma Chan. Previously he worked as a screenwriter in Los Angeles, and as a music and theater teacher.

Danielle Brazell transitioned Arts for LA from an ad hoc steering committee comprised of local executive arts leadership to a highly visible arts advocacy organization. She is the former Director of Special Projects for the Screen Actors Guild Foundation and Artistic Director of Highways Performance Space.

TOM TORLAKSON
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

June 15, 2012

Dear Select County and District Superintendents:

FEDERAL FUNDING TO SUPPORT ARTS EDUCATION

This letter is intended to clarify the use of federal funding to support arts education.

Under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), local educational agencies (LEAs) have the flexibility within certain programs to use federal funds to support the arts. However, Title I, Part A funds may not be used to fund programs whose primary objective is arts education. These funds may be used only in limited circumstances to fund aspects of arts education if the strategies have been demonstrated to improve student academic achievement in English-language arts (ELA) and/or mathematics. In order to use Title I, Part A funds, a Title I school's School Site Council (SSC) must develop, review, update, and approve the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA), which then must be approved by the local governing board. Any LEA seeking to use funds for this purpose must comply with the requirements governing the development and approval of the SPSA.

Title I funding might be appropriately used to support arts education as a strategy to improve student achievement in ELA and mathematics at a Title I school if, after conducting a comprehensive needs assessment, the school has identified research-based strategies or programs incorporating arts instruction to improve the academic achievement in ELA and mathematics for participating students. Implementation of the selected strategy or program should include student achievement objectives that are research-based, specific, measurable, attainable, and focused on increasing the academic achievement for all participating students in the school. At the end of each year, implementation of the strategy or program must be evaluated for effectiveness in terms of its impact on student achievement.

Other federal programs, including Title II, Part A can be used more broadly to support arts education in the context of professional development, strategic partnerships with nonprofit organizations, model program development, and the dissemination of best practices. Because of the complexity and varying rules of different federal programs, LEAs are encouraged to refer to their legal counsel regarding the specific uses of ESEA funds when designing programs.

As LEAs struggle to prioritize expenditures with the scarce federal, state, and local resources currently available, it is prudent to be clear regarding the opportunities and legal parameters associated with using federal funding to support arts education.

Superintendent Torlakson believes strongly that children should receive a holistic education that includes activities that reinforce academics, develop skills, capture student interest, and support student engagement. Arts education can play an important role in this regard. We hope this letter will assist you in making important decisions about the use of federal dollars to support arts education.

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact Christine Swenson, Director, Improvement and Accountability Division, by phone at 916-319-0926 or by e-mail atcswenson@cde.ca.gov.

Sincerely Deborah V. H. Sigman, Deputy Superintendent
District, School, and Inovation Branch

CHARTING A POLICY PATHWAY: CALIFORNIA'S APPROACH

1. Beginning with research – Research undertaken by Arts for All identifies gaps in access to arts education in Los Angeles County schools, highlighting needs of Title I schools.

2. Framing the policy issue – Arts for LA analyzes data and connects it to the issue of Title I funding, identifying a need for guidance from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction on the possible and appropriate role of arts education in Title I programs.

3. Building partnership around the issue – Arts for LA invites support of potential partners, including the California Alliance for Arts Education. Six partner organizations from around the state, including the State PTA, sign a letter to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

4. Gathering public support for the issue – The Alliance and Arts for LA co-author an op-ed calling on the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to advance change. In addition they create an "action alert," asking members to send letters to the Superintendent. His office receives more than 400 letters.

5. Cultivating relationships within the State Department of Education – The Alliance initiates meetings with California State Department of Education (CDE) staff. The meetings clarify the potential value of arts education strategies in supporting Title I goals, and the Department's role as administrator of Title I funding. The meetings lead to a guidance letter from the CDE, identifying the appropriate use of arts education strategies to support Title I goals.

6. Emphasizing a consistent message at the state and federal level – The Alliance meets with the head of Title I at the U. S. Department of Education in Washington, D.C. to clarify federal support for arts education strategies within Title I guidelines.

7. Spreading the word – The Alliance hosts a panel at the California Title I conference, featuring representatives from CDE and the Arizona Department of Education, an education researcher, a deputy superintendent, and a principal of a Title I school.

8. Facilitating the success of school and district exemplars – The Alliance identifies geographically diverse Title I schools and districts throughout the state willing to use Title I funds to implement educational strategies that include the arts that are aligned with state and federal guidance.

9. Paving the way for other schools and districts to follow – The Alliance plans to build on information gathered from the experience of exemplar schools and districts to develop resources that can support other schools and districts in embracing arts education to achieve Title I goals.

PHOTO CREDITS
Inside front cover: Armory Center for the Arts
Page 2: Habla Center for Language and Culture
Page 3: Armory Center for the Arts
Page 4: Armory Center for the Arts
Page 5: Clockwise from top left:
1) CalArts Community Arts Partnerships
2) Habla Center for Language and Culture
3) Teresa Kennett, Performing Arts Workshop
4) CalArts Community Arts Partnerships
Page 7: Armory Center for the Arts
Page 8: Habla Center for Language and Culture
Page 9: Habla Center for Language and Culture
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AUTHORS
Lauren Stevenson, *Junction Box Consulting*
Joe Landon, *California Alliance for Arts Education*
Danielle Brazell, *Arts for LA*

CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE FOR ARTS EDUCATION STAFF
Joe Landon, *Executive Director*
Sibyl O'Malley, *Communications Director*
Jennifer Wong, *Development & Operations Manager*

DESIGNER
Marika van Adelsberg

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