



## Mobilizing a Professional Community: A New Brand of Leadership: A Call to Action

**It appears that a combination of creative and transformational leadership strategies will be needed to help parents, school boards, policy makers, community leaders, and elected officials place art education in its proper context—not as an expendable luxury, but as an essential component of a well-rounded education in this digital age.**

NAEA is working collaboratively to move the national conversation about visual literacy and art education in new and positive directions, as well as preparing NAEA members to conduct that conversation inside and outside their classrooms.

The advocacy struggle is extremely difficult and far from over. To inform a broader constituency and to deepen the understanding of decision makers about why art education is essential, NAEA realizes that art educators need to become their own champions, articulating the importance of visual literacy and the added significance of art education to a creative economy. Yet, many art educators have difficulty articulating the essential learning that takes place in their classrooms to stakeholders outside the art education community.

The need for visual literacy in the age of the Internet and social media brings heightened importance to the role of art education in society. Art educators help students build the recognition, perception, sensitivity, imagination, and integration skills needed to make sense of the world around them (Eisner, 2002). Art educators teach the technical skills needed to execute ideas, but they also challenge students to think in ways that promote discovery and exploration, that risk the possibility of failure as the price of moving ahead,

and that embrace surprise as a much-desired learning outcome. Digital media gives art education a wider mission, making visual acuity a skill set arguably as important as reading or math proficiency.

Art education needs to be positioned and its purposes communicated with an eye toward the compelling context of ever-proliferating visuality in the 21st century. Only creative leadership—including the identification of valuable new ideas, the analysis of competing alternatives, and the promotion of select ideas to stakeholders inside and outside the art education community—can make this transformation a reality.

Correcting the paradox of decreasing access to art education requires answers from both within and without. In outreach to professional communities beyond art education, NAEA's goal is not to maintain that art is better or more important than math or reading. Rather, we seek to help others—educators, voters, taxpayers, policy makers, and the public—understand why visual art education is essential to the development of human potential.

With creative leadership from both national and state levels, we can begin a new dialogue on the critical role of art education within society and the creative economy; to re-establish art education as a core subject within the public school curriculum and as a priority within school budgets, and to build new bridges of understanding about art education with other stakeholder communities in order to ensure a brighter and more sustainable future.