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National Art Education Association

PPAA News

By Sarah Ackermann, PhD



It is my pleasure to introduce **PPAA News**, a bi-monthly newsletter brought to you by the Public Policy and Arts Administration interest group. The purpose of PPAA at large is to promote the study, research, and teaching of issues in public policy and arts administration as they affect and are affected by arts education in schools, arts organizations, and community settings. The purpose of this publication is to highlight the work and expertise of those invested in the research of visual and performing arts, arts education, law, public administration, and the social, political, and administrative sciences. We are excited to feature guest writers from around the world.

For the month of May we focus on the history of public policy as it pertains to arts administration. In an issue of [PolicyLink](#) Kamila Rose, Milly Hawk Daniel, and Jeremy Liu (2017) wrote that:

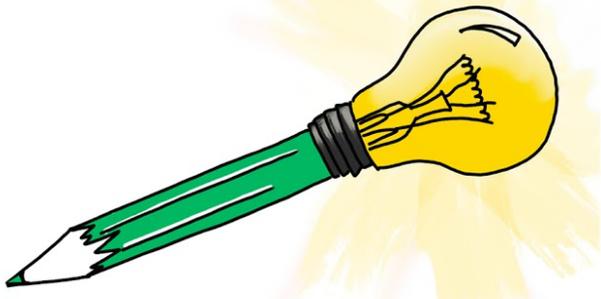
Arts and culture are essential for building community, supporting development, nurturing health and well-being, and contributing to economic opportunity. Collectively, arts and culture enable understanding of the past and envisioning of a shared, more equitable future. (Rose, Daniel, Liu, 2017)

As a community, art educators at large understand and vehemently defend the benefits of art education. Many of us continue to combat concerns of inequality in arts access, but can you imagine a time when the arts weren't supported at all?

Thanks to the hard work of past leaders, we've made it this far. The Americans for the Arts (n.d.) provide a comprehensive [National Arts Policy History Timeline](#) documenting fifty years of development in this arena. The timeline begins in 1961 when President Kennedy was quoted to have said, "We must come to accept the arts as a new community responsibility..." (The Americans for the Arts, n.d.).

This date is powerful to me for a variety of reasons personally and professionally. My mother was born in 1961, and later went on to study graphic design. I have to wonder, what was the impact of President Kennedy's declaration on my mother's career endeavors? If he had remained silent on this issue would the arts have risen in importance among society? Would my mother have pursued another academic focus, non-art related? Would that have, in-turn, affected my interests as a budding artist and arts educator?

Certainly we have a long way to go when it comes to support and funding for the arts, however imagine for one moment, an



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alternate universe in which Kennedy did not share these views, which catapulted years of committee work and research.

An Interview with Leadership



As a relatively new member to PPAA myself, I am eager to learn more about this group and the history of public policy and the arts at large. Let's dive deeper together with our newly elected President, Dr. Trina Harlow.

Dr. Harlow has served as the Art Education Coordinator for the last six years at Kansas State University, and was recently promoted to non-tenure track Teaching Assistant Professor after the completion of her doctoral degree. In August of 2020 she will assume a new position as tenure-track Assistant Professor at the University of Central Arkansas where exciting things are happening in the visual arts. She is a dedicated member of NAEA, as well as the Kansas Art Education Association, and soon, the Arkansas Art Educators. She was a four-year representative for the NAEA Professional Learning through Research Working Group, serving as an at-large member, and then the Western Region representative. She has also served NAEA in a variety of other capacities, including serving on the Ft. Worth Convention

Committee. She was awarded the Emerging Scholar Award from the International Arts in Society Research Network.

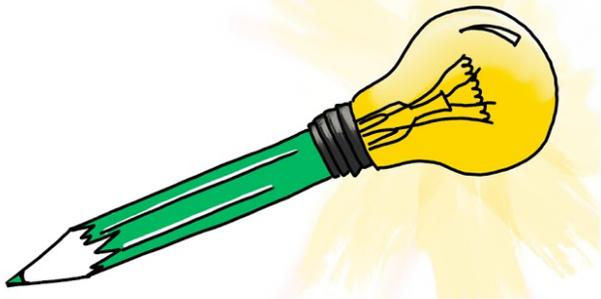
I had the opportunity to sit down with Dr. Harlow and gain her insights concerning this field and the future at-large. Following was my Q&A with our fearless leader:

Tell us about your history with public policy in the arts.

Dr. Harlow: I think I was a teacher for quite some time BEFORE I realized how much public policy and arts administration by government and non-profit entities affected art education. Probably the two most profound ways art is affected in this realm is in regards to funding for the arts and lobbying for the accessibility of art education for all students in the United States. In recent years, I have begun paying attention to who determines the position of arts in our society.

Where does your passion for public policy in the arts stem from?

Dr. Harlow: During my twenty-six year career as an educator, I have seen the arts be administered so differently, depending on how a school district superintendent, principal, or local school boards view the arts. There are truly so many differences across the United States and often, school art teachers are really at the mercy of



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administrators. As an art educator, it hurts my teacher's soul to see brilliant colleagues have their programs taken away, budgets slashed, and even their classrooms given to another content area and the appearance of the famous rolling cart.

I grew up in a very small rural community that had a huge passion for the arts, all of the arts. I thought that was "normal" the whole time I was growing up. It was not until I moved away from my hometown as an adult to teach in another state that I realized that my hometown was highly unique. How the arts are administered across this great country is so varied and often exhibits inequity.

Additionally, the arts – dance, music, drama, and the visual arts – were a huge part of my own childhood and adolescence. I know first hand how creative thinking and imagination can transport a farm girl to being a university professor, who travels across the world (well, pre-pandemic) seeking out creative activity. The arts changed my life, and they made some aspects of my own childhood much more enduring. I KNOW exactly how the arts can reach into the minds and souls of students, providing them a way to express themselves and also providing a vehicle for learning how to think that transfers to all areas of their lives. I truly feel sorry for school students across this country that do not have the visual arts – or any arts

programs – in their schools and there are many communities that are lacking arts programs.

What do you think has been the most important milestone in arts public policy history?

Dr. Harlow: In my opinion, the Every Student Succeeds Act, passed in 2015, is the most important milestone of the last couple of years. Information about ESSA can be found [here](#) (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

For particular information about how ESSA affects the arts, see this [NAEA \(n.d.\) link](#).

What does the future of public policy in the arts look like in your opinion?

Dr. Harlow: As I answer this on May 1, 2020 with a global pandemic swirling around us, I am not sure how the future of education looks, let alone the future of art education. Scholars and researchers of art education have been watching the evolution of art education during COVID19.

I am a part of a team of art educators that started the Online Art Teachers (K-12) Facebook Group, a service project by art teachers for art teachers to assist with the swift move to home-centered instruction during the social distancing of the coronavirus. Team leaders are all national



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leaders in art education: Dr. Sarah Ackermann (Illinois), Beth Dobberstein (Wisconsin), Holly Kincaid (Virginia), Kate Miller (Kansas), Bob Reeker (Nebraska), Randy Robart (Ohio), and Marie Taylor (Kansas). Through the more than 10,000 members of this OATK12 Facebook Group, from over 110 countries yet with 80% being American teachers, and over 250K posts, we learned so much about the inequity in art education, pre-COVID and during-COVID... and providing much knowledge for post-Covid.

Recently I saw a real poster from 1932 that lobbied for electricity for all. Positioned beside this poster was a new poster that lobbied for the Internet for all. I believe that in the post-COVID world, we as a society have to address the inequities that exist not only in art education, but all of education for students whose socio-economic status or whose geographic location make it difficult for them to have Internet access. I still visit much family in rural areas and oftentimes my cell phone won't work where they live, and not everyone can afford expensive Internet services in rural areas. Additionally, some rural areas just don't have a way to provide Internet yet. I believe PPAA needs to be a stakeholder at the inequity table when the Internet for all issue is discussed. It is our new post office and our new "electricity" . . . and it might just be our new school classroom – at least in times of emergency.

Closure



Special thanks to Dr. Harlow, this month, for graciously sitting down to chat with me. We look forward to continuing the conversation with another wonderful leader in public policy during our next issue of **PPAA News!**

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