Introduction

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What are white papers, and how can they help further the National Art Education Association’s mission? NAEA aims to make public what the visual arts have to offer that is special and demonstrate why visual arts education is important for meeting each student’s educational needs. White papers are advocacy reports that can be used to educate various audiences—in this case, policy makers, school superintendents, school administrators, teachers, preservice educators, parents, and the general public—about relevant issues. White papers often are requested from academics at universities or from state, local, or national leaders to assist policy developers by sharing expertise gained from knowledge about current and relevant research in a particular field.

How did this group of fourteen Advocacy White Papers for Art Education come about, and what important ideas and judgments do they set forth for the field of visual arts education? In March 2010, Robert Sabol, then President-Elect of NAEA, asked me (as Chair of the NAEA Distinguished Fellows) to contact the Fellows and ask if some would be willing to volunteer and write white papers related to various concerns addressed in a 2009 NAEA report, Learning in a Visual Age: The Critical Importance of Visual Arts Education. This report grew out of an NAEA-sponsored meeting at the Aspen Institute attended by scholars, important stakeholders, and friends of arts education. A collection of responses to this document, in the form of white papers, would focus upon communicating the value of visual arts education in a constantly changing educational environment. This collection of papers would be available to the NAEA membership and the general public to help inform advocacy and policy discussions and decisions.

Learning in a Visual Age attempted to answer several significant questions about contemporary visual art education. What is visual art education, and what does it provide? Why is it important, and what can art educators teach their colleagues in other disciplines? In order to help inform policy and decision-making at national, state, and local levels, this set of Advocacy White Papers for Art Education expands on five of six main points emphasized in Learning in a Visual Age. These five main points are listed below along with the authors of white papers found in each section. Thirteen Fellows and three invited NAEA members authored this collection of Advocacy White Papers for Art Education. I served as adviser and editor of all fourteen papers; Mary Stokrocki and Renee Sandell assisted with the preparation of papers in their sections.

Section I: What High-Quality Art Education Provides
(Kerry Freedman and Pat Stuhr; Jerome Hausman, James Haywood Rolling)

Section II: How High-Quality Arts Education Can Prepare Students for the Future
(Karen Keifer-Boyd; Mary Stokrocki; Brent Wilson)

Continued >>>>
Section III: What Excellent Visual Arts Teaching Looks Like
(Lynn Beudert; Judith Burton; Renee Sandell)

Section IV: How to Infuse the Arts into Learning Environments
(Kit Grauer; Peter London; Enid Zimmerman)

Section V: Ensuring Excellent Visual Arts Education for Every Student
(Susan Gabbard and Barbara Laws; Melody Milbrandt)

Thank you in advance for taking the time to read these Advocacy White Papers for Art Education. These papers are meant to inform you about the importance of visual art education; they are not criticisms of the field or presentations of unsubstantiated, personal points of view. In addition to those who are well informed, the audience for these papers also includes constituents who may not be knowledgeable about our field. I hope these papers are inspirational and useful for advocating for art education and its importance in your own teaching and learning situation. After reading these papers, it is crucial that you use them to promote the importance of visual art education and take action to ensure that all students, in a variety of contexts, are able to observe, perceive, and create visually in our increasingly interconnected world.