

A WELCOME FROM SYMPOSIUM CO-HOSTS

Since 2013, Americans for the Arts, the Kennedy Center, and the Arts Education Partnership (AEP) have partnered on an annual State Policy Symposium. In 2016, we welcome our new partner, Education Commission of the States, as the new host of AEP.

The symposium benefits the members of our organizations, as states are often isolated in their efforts to support arts education. Co-hosting an event provides an opportunity for state leaders to share knowledge and network among their peers. This strategy helps to share best practices across the states through a national network of arts and education experts. State arts leaders, as well as representatives of community-based and out-of-school time programs, can gain insights from policy experts through in-depth workshops that include reports, case studies, and other tools that they can learn from and replicate in their home state in support of dance, media arts, music, theatre and visual arts.

Over the years, we've seen more and more education reform at the state level, with nearly all states receiving a waiver from the *No Child Left Behind Act*. States have been grappling with issues such as standards, teacher evaluation, and accountability systems. It was no surprise that when Congress finally reauthorized the federal education law in December 2015, even more responsibility shifted to the states.

The 2016 symposium's title, "States of Change," is more timely than ever. With shifting federal priorities, increased state autonomy, and diverse communities and school systems, the education ecosystem is both dynamic and complex. Aligning national, state and local efforts to advance the arts in education, however, will make this ecosystem more powerful than the sum of its parts.

As we seek to provide all students with an education that is coordinated among classroom teachers, arts specialists, and community partners, now is a moment for us to reflect on the following questions: What impact will the passing of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* have on arts education? How can the arts education community engage with shifting state and local leaders and priorities? How are the arts being utilized in successful models of educational change? This is a great time to consider the role and contributions of the arts in shaping education reform efforts.

We hope participants will leave the symposium empowered to strengthen arts education in their states and communities — ensuring that the arts are an integral part of the lives and educations of all students.

