

CYCLICAL MENTORSHIP IN ARTS EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

Insights from Emerging and Veteran Leaders



A CONVERSATION BETWEEN

ANDRE GREEN AND TEE LAMBERT



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ABOUT & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

About Americans for the Arts

The mission of Americans for the Arts is to serve, advance, and lead the network of organizations and individuals who cultivate, promote, sustain, and support the arts in America.

Founded in 1960, Americans for the Arts is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education. From offices in Washington, DC and New York City, we provide a rich array of programs that meet the needs of more than 150,000 members and stakeholders. We are dedicated to representing and serving local communities and to creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts.

About the Arts Education Program

The Arts Education Program provides leadership development, networking, research, and tools that empower individuals and organizations to create equitable systems and strong policies which strengthen the arts education ecosystem. We seek to unify diverse stakeholders, including arts education professionals, cultural and education sector leaders, the business community, parents, and young people, to create change in their communities, states, and the nation.

About the Emerging Leaders Program

The Emerging Leaders Program identifies and cultivates the next generation of arts leaders in America. Through professional development and peer networking opportunities on the national and local levels, members contribute their enthusiasm, creativity, and potential to strengthening the arts in America and building the next generation of arts leaders.

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INTRODUCTION

Arts education programs nationally are challenged to serve an ever-diversifying student population. As trends in the field of arts education are maturing to reflect demographic shifts, leaders of these programs must facilitate meaningful and comprehensive succession planning to prepare the next generation of leaders in this important sector.

Unfortunately, while established and robust arts learning programs emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, **leadership in the field still does not adequately reflect youth served or communities in which the programs operate.** The challenges faced by these organizations could be aided by leveraging the strategies employed throughout the field of arts administration to diversify and broaden the leadership pipeline, empowering future leaders while simultaneously honoring and harnessing the great work of current leadership. These strategies can and should be explored to promote intergenerational dialogue and cyclical mentorship among arts education leaders.

RESEARCH APPROACH

As the population of students served continues to change and grow in their challenges, needs, and demography, research shows that national organizations—such as Americans for the Arts—have a responsibility to broaden the leadership pipeline and build future leaders through intergenerational dialogue. A community-based participatory approach to research should be taken to connect youth, emerging and mid-career leaders (adults), and veterans (adult elders) to leverage effective strategies to honor community differences and develop sustainable missions. Among others, the higher education and nonprofit sectors have led strategic investments in capacity building of multi-generational teams for purposes of fostering dialogue to engage the next generation of leaders in a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable way.

In 2017, Americans for the Arts conducted research to illuminate effective practices of emerging and seasoned leaders in the field of arts education. The research was intended to inform the development of programming to assist in cyclical mentorship, intergenerational dialogue, and to support the broadening and diversifying of the pool of new leaders in the arts education field.

Research was led by emerging leaders and supported by mid-career and veteran staff and was deployed in a community-based, participatory manner. Researchers used a form of simultaneous storytelling and data gathering with participants to gather perspectives and generate authentic discussion. The following documented interviews are transcripts of the dialogues.

“You will be the very best at what you do when you build relationships one at a time”

Jean Tokuda Irwin,
Arts Education Program Manager,
Utah Division of Arts & Museums

FINDINGS

The overall findings from the research were grouped in several categories ranging from transformative moments in leaders' own development to suggestions for tackling systemic barriers to equitable leadership development.

Participants shared anecdotes about their times of growth and moments of challenge as leaders in the arts education field. For some, this moment of success was with an effective mentor and for others it was overcoming a systemic barrier challenging their race or socio-economic status.

All participants felt that systemic barriers impede the development of diverse leaders in the pipeline. They offered solutions such as shifts in the culture of internships, payment structures, certifications or inclusion of alternative qualifications, and changing certain aspects of the culture of arts or educational leadership.

Additionally, participants believed in the power to grow and change as emerging, mid-career, or veteran leaders through professional learning and leadership skill development. Suggestions included: building stronger relationships among broad swaths of individuals, engaging in inquiry-based research and management, developing a more 'facilitated' leadership style, and mobilizing your own practice as a student of your surroundings.

In a session held at the 2017 Americans for the Arts' Annual Conference, the topic of **'cyclical mentorship'** was proposed for consideration in a participatory session discussing the future of arts education leadership. This proposed cycle of mentorship begins as young people are mentored by adult arts educators, emerging leaders are mentored by both elders and youth, and elders are mentored by both emerging leaders and youth. This concept engages the broad concepts of intergenerational dialogue and artistic skill development to engage each other in shared learning and to have shared responsibility for the future of our field by way of the pipeline built to enhance leadership.

The following case study will highlight perspectives on these broad themes and is intended to inform and inspire emerging, mid-career, and veteran leaders to engage in this work.



Emerging Leader in Arts Education

ANDRE GREEN

FORMER POLITICAL DIRECTOR, MASSCREATIVE

Andre joined MASSCreative as the organization's first Political Director in September 2016 to help build a strong campaign platform, forge better relationships at the State House and in City Halls, build partnerships with civic and political leaders, and to work with the organization's political team to lead its campaign work. Andre brings 15 years of experience in education, operations, technology, data analysis and advocacy. Prior to MassCreative, Andre worked at YouthBuild USA where he developed strategies for outreach connecting 500 program staff and 10,000 students and alumni with Federal Representation. In addition to advocacy efforts

at a federal level, he has consulted with state organizations on coalition building to develop comprehensive, cross-issue solutions to problems such as family homelessness. In addition to his work for MASSCreative, Andre serves as an elected official, representing Somerville's 4th Ward on the School Committee. Andre is a graduate of Bard College at Simon's Rock, where he studied Politics and Psychology.



Veteran Leader in Arts Education

TEE LAMBERT

MEMBER, WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD

Mrs. Tee Lambert began serving her fourth four-year term on the WESD Governing Board in 2017. Mrs. Lambert has been employed at the Arizona Department of Education as the Title I Monitoring Coordinator, in the School Excellence Division for the past 13 years.

In Arizona, public education has not been strongly supported in the state's budget and schools made budget decisions that adversely affected students ability to access the arts. Tee worked with her WESD Governing Board to provide parity and bringing back the arts in 2004 that had been reduced or eliminated throughout the district.

The Governing Board was able to increase the arts program for students, even in the beginning of "The Great Recession."

In 2009 Tee participated in program with National Endowment for the Arts Education Leaders Institute (ELI) in March 2009. ELI brought together school leaders, legislators, policy makers, educators, consultants, and scholars to envision a healthy national education environment founded on powerful arts education programs. In 2013 Tee also participated with Arizona Citizen's for the Arts, Arizona Commission for the Arts, and Americans for the Arts with the State Public Policy Program (SP3) focused on having the K-12 arts education to be part of the discussions on funding for schools, the accountability system and electing officials that support the arts.

Q: Please reflect on a transformative moment for you as an arts education leader from a mentor or mentee.



TEE: Well, I think for myself, the chance to be part of the ELI project that was put on by the National Endowment for the Arts was the moment. Arizona was part of the third cohort and we learned about arts advocacy for arts education. There was a gentleman who came to speak to us about the difference of being an advocate to a change agent and about the difference and how they worked together. Just being an advocate and being a voice to promote is different than being a change agent which is really how to discuss and have those discussions in presenting different ideas and getting people to look at things differently. That was a revelation for me because I've been an advocate for public education, for my own community and they approach it a little bit differently from being a change agent. We had an opportunity to hear from other states and the challenges that they face with arts education and how they dealt with the inclusion of arts in their programs and schools. It's a difference of speaking with folks and not at them and that was a real 'ah-ha' moment in changing how I do my advocacy work to becoming more of a change agent.



ANDRE: So, I came to arts education work from larger educational policy work. For me, I think the moment that I realized the importance of arts education comes from my work on my local school committee in urban districts with one of the highest graduation rates in the state and it was because our students felt engaged. We talked to our students about why they felt engaged and it was about, "I'm passionate about my music or my art—my school supports that—I come here and I work on my video projects." So to me, it was about, you know, arts education works. We want college education, we want to help break the cycle of poverty—arts education does that.

Q: Are there systemic barriers to leadership within the field of arts education? What is one suggestion on how we might tackle it?



TEE: The reality is that I'm a governing board member for a K-8 district and I also work at the Department of Education in Title 1. We promote integrated arts as a reform model to help schools and kids' achievement. One of the hardest pieces is changing the perception of the value of K-12 arts education and that it's not just about producing artists, it's not just to allow teachers to have break times at their schools, that being able to share the fact of the skill sets and study habits that kids gain through arts education, that they strengthen and support student's success in all areas—English Language Arts, math, science, social studies, and even in PE. One of the barriers I've faced is that the teachers themselves and their perception of the value of what they bring and how that works within K-12 arts and higher education perspectives. I have a brother in law who is a dean of music college and we have these ongoing debates—he doesn't think

we should talk about the value of arts education and what it does to strengthen a whole child's education experience but just to talk about how special the arts are because of the arts. I think that's what limits the discussion because if you're never planning on being an artist and you feel you don't have skills to be an artist then that makes that the whole subject irrelevant to your life instead of understanding that it's a blend and important for the whole child.



ANDRE: I have a question that I just have to ask. Why doesn't he think that you're talking about the larger benefits of art? What's his reasoning for that?



TEE: He's a Dean of Choral Music, so his idea is that we shouldn't focus on singing (in the K-8 music classes) as part of strengthening the educational experience but just that being able to sing, itself, is its own value. And I've told him, "there is that—it doesn't exclude the other" but he just thinks we need to talk about the importance of singing, not the importance of the educational process and learning about song.



ANDRE: I would say that there are barriers in two levels of things—part of it is that schools and districts have underfunded arts education and undervalue in it. A lot of schools and districts have part-time, fractural positions for arts educators which makes it hard for anyone that just has an art position to get some arts expertise, but at the same time that could be an opening for, say, working artists to do what artists do. As creative artists, we're part of the people working [point two and point three] and that makes the number of people who can actually pursue this field limited.

I also think that there's also a barrier once you're in the field, I don't know the number off the top of my head but I can't imagine my district where I'm a school team member, the answer is none. But none of our principals, faculty, teachers, come from an arts background. There's no pipeline for arts leaders to become larger leaders and I think also finding the opportunity and the thinking around how arts education is part of the field. And that's going into that point three—you've got to get a master's degree. This also creates some barriers to people who don't have the privilege to pursue a master's degree.



TEE: Can I add to what he said, when my governing board hat jumps on, I think that comes to what you're speaking about with the challenges of getting a qualified educator for those arts programs. It is about the perception of the value of K-12 arts education—it always becomes an extra. So, if my district is short of money, the board will make financial decisions that are not based on the value of the programs of what we teach. It's probably one of the bigger battles I face as a board member, when they want to make cuts, that's where they go to the extracurricular programs. And I am so tired of deciding that we need to keep it because teachers need breaks, or time for their PLCs, that's not why we should have an arts program, ya know?



ANDRE: So can I go off of that? One of the things we always talk about is one of the reasons we really want to see some space in their plans: really putting arts education in the targeted plans for their school. Schools with lower than desired math and reading scores says, “alright we are going to hire some artists.” The data is pretty clear that, arts education, as Tee was pointing out, does lead to higher outcomes in the math and reading space.

But that can be a hard case to make, because if you’re a principal and you’re trying to improve your reading scores then the first thing is you need tutors and you don’t move a needle. “Oh, we can hire the right tutors, we can follow the right parameters, we can keep at it.” If you’re a principal and you say, “oh we’re going to improve our reading scores by investing in arts education,” and you don’t move the needle? You’re going to get fired. So we have to do a better job at explaining why we should invest in arts education and why it’s not an extra co-curricular because then they’re only going to fund it as a co-curricular.

Q: What is the virtue of broadening the leadership pipeline for the field of arts education?



ANDRE: So I think the first benefit, and I think this is always the first benefit when we speak to any education, is that it benefits students. It matters, especially in your low-income communities, your communities where not necessarily everyone in the school has two parents at home. It matters when they see leaders who look them. Who remind them of themselves. Who they can see themselves in. It matters that those students can see people who can make a career doing those things they love, right? It matters that we can show to young people of color that if you’re passionate about music, you don’t have to become a rap star to make music your life. It’s important that we have those models and those pathways, it helps with engagement right? If you feel connections with your teachers, you’re going to do better.

I used to work for a group called YouthBuild and we dealt with people who had already dropped out. And almost invariably, the answer was almost always that no one cared about them. So that’s the first thing, it benefits the students. But also, diversity benefits the field. We do better as art lovers and art appreciators and art supporters if we have art leaders that come from a broad variety of artistic experiences. I have several friends who are professional ballet teachers. But if the entire arts education world comes from the very traditional, classic, European fine arts tradition then you’re not educating people as well as you could because there’s a whole variety of fantastic artistic experiences that we leave them missing out on.



TEE: This question, I had to really think about this question, the definition of leadership means something different, when I hear Andre talk, leadership means a little different. In my world, by broadening the leadership, which to me, would be the advocates of arts education and the leaders of increasing arts education, when you add diversity in your voices in your advocacy, you help

touch and make it relevant to everybody's life. So, in my world, it's not just our arts educators, it's not just our public education advocates, it's getting businesses, it's getting community members, it's getting faith-based partners that also add their voices and their lens when we talk about the importance of arts education and how that relates to you. But to be successful in that, you really need to have common talking points that are utilized in all discussions with all different stakeholders. Then you build on that discussion the value that arts education has on their individual lives because people do not support things or work towards things unless they themselves have seen a benefit to it. Bringing in that diversity of outside people, making sure our political folks have an arts experience, and see the value of arts. That will help leadership in changing how our states fund education, so that we can include the arts, having our educators understand, ensuring that our public-school board members also have that value, and even in our businesses in our community understand the importance of it. With that question, talking about the virtue of broadening the leadership pipeline—I think we came at it from two different ways but we're still talking about the quality of arts education.



ANDRE: ...And to be clear, I agree with everything she just said.



Q: What types of skills do you feel have a long-lasting impact on the development of leadership in your work?



ANDRE: This is going to sound trite and cliché so I apologize in advance, but I really think it's about learning how to listen. For me, I came to this work from poverty work, from education, arts education, so for me, myself, I'm an okay writer but I'm not an artist in that traditional sense. So for me, it was being able to know what I don't know, but also knowing what other people don't know. A lot of what I do in my role as an arts advocate is try to help arts educators, but artists more broadly, think of themselves as leaders. So you know, it's helping arts educators think of themselves as superintendents [or other leadership roles], because if we don't think arts education is core then no one is going to, right? So it's that piece, that listening piece, helping people see what's already in front of them. Because they know, it's just that they don't know they know, and people who are speaking are never really heard.



TEE: I think about the skill sets that I think will help to show how arts education has a positive personal affect to the person or group of people that I'm speaking to. I go back to my earlier statement that people don't take action unless they personally benefit. That's just human nature. So, when I'm at a home owners group or when I'm speaking with individuals at parent's night in talking about arts education and the importance of arts education, I talk about what it does for the education system: what it does in helping our students express themselves and be able to learn language. Just reminding them that the oldest form of language was with the arts—it was

with song, it was with visual arts and that speaks to history of who we are as a people. What that does, in working collaboratively together shows how that benefits them and their neighborhoods and the kids that are being raised in their neighborhoods and how that keeps their homes in a nice, safe environment so it doesn't collapse so they don't have to run and do the urban flight thing. If I am speaking to a person individually, then I outline that everyone has experiences with the arts—you listen to music, you doodle, you demonstrate skills that you learn in arts education because there's a different paradigm of how they instruct in arts education from when you're in English class or science class. But they all meld together. How that benefits—and I go back to what Andre said – one of the most important skills is listening and then thoughtfully responding, not reacting to what they say. But repeating it back to them and getting them to talk more about what that meant to them, why they think that way, what experience happened to them to bring them to that determination, and just responding not reacting.

Q: Do you have advice for future leaders in the field of arts education? What is your hope for the future of leadership in arts education?



TEE: One of the problems about talking to a politician is that I talk too much, so excuse me. I guess the advice that I have is understanding that when we create the change by promoting and bringing in quality arts education in our public schools and the importance of it—that it takes time. The message needs to be consistent and you have to keep the conversation going. You're not going to be able to walk in, give a fabulous speech, have them all stand up and applaud, and then it's done. It's an important task and it's person by person as I to talk to them, asking them to think of it as developing a choir or a dance troupe. It takes time to bring the talent on and build the skills that are needed, but when it's complete, it'll just take your breath away. It's just that ongoing piece that's got to be there.

People want to be able to stand up and make a change. We see that in politics every day—"We're gonna make America great again." I guess my hope for the future is that leadership continues to grow, that we don't ever give up on the conversation. That we start to work not just arts education advocacy over here, and the public education discussion over there, but that we work together in concert. Because if we start joining our voices, that just makes us bigger and larger and louder—too hard to ignore. Because arts education in my brain is integrated, its important, it's just as important as reading, and math, along with having an arts education. It's not an either/or, it's got to be both in working together so the voices have got to come together.



ANDRE: I want to first of all agree with a lot of what Tee just said and I think for me, especially in politics, is that everything takes a lot longer than it should. So one of my pieces of advice is to remember that the way change happens often is "not at all, not at all, not at all, all at once." So keep plugging away and know that eventually you'll crack that wall and once you hit that first crack, the next one comes quicker and quicker and all of a sudden, there's a deluge of change.

The other piece of advice I want to give, and it ties into what she was saying are her hopes are also my hopes, so I guess the biggest piece of advice I would give is to not think of arts education as somehow special and separate from all the other forms of education. Our goal isn't to have the best arts education program, our goal is to have well-educated kids and you do that by having free arts education and robust arts programs. So keep in mind that our goal to educate young people to better their abilities, that the goal we share in common with all community members and all educators and we use arts education as a means to hit that end.

And my other hope is that arts education leaders aren't just arts education leaders—they're leaders more broadly. I want to see music teachers become the superintendent. I want to see museum aficionados running for school committees. I want to see arts educators leading the broader education sector.

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