

# ARKANSAS

## AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS STATE POLICY PILOT PROGRAM – SP3

Arkansas has been selected, after applying on a competitive basis, to be one of ten (10) pilot states to participate in Americans for the Arts' comprehensive national campaign to advance arts education, the [State Policy Pilot Program](#) (SP3).

The Arkansas SP3 Team will facilitate an action plan for the development and implementation of an arts education policy strategy for a 3-year period. Americans for the Arts will provide in-depth customized technical assistance and \$10,000 each year to assist Arkansas in successfully creating its plan and achieving its planned goals. To ensure that best practices will be developed, both in the state and nationally, the team will attend an annual symposium to share learning with other state teams, participate annually in a meeting of the State Arts Advocacy Network, and produce a final report, outlining what worked and did not work during participation in the pilot program. These final report/case studies will be turned into policy development tools for the field.



The Arkansas SP3 Team plans to make knowledge and training available to implement the newly adopted Arkansas arts standards [credit: Ozark Foothills FilmFest, Inc.]

The Arkansas SP3 team, led by a new statewide arts advocacy organization – Arkansans for the Arts – plans to use the three-year pilot program to (a) make knowledge and training available to implement the newly adopted Arkansas arts standards, (b) establish a large state group of arts and arts education supporters from different regions with the capacity to plan and implement a statewide agenda to advance arts education, and (c) connect school and community resources for arts education locally throughout the state.

Arkansas recently revised and updated its state arts standards, as informed by the recommendations of the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards that were released in June 2014. The Arkansas SP3 Team then gathered information, in conjunction with professional development workshops, to determine the status of the relationships between school arts education programs and community arts activities throughout the state. Findings from over 400 responses to a 10-question survey showed that school-community arts education relationships were uneven. They identified communities with strong partnerships between schools and not-for-profit arts organizations. Additionally, they identified under-resourced communities and found that poor and rural communities were especially challenged when trying to pool

adequate resources to effectively teach to the standards. In one community a not-for-profit with a strong arts education program would struggle to establish an appropriate relationship with the school system and in another community a school would be having difficulty attracting the attention of artists and arts organizations to their arts education needs and desired partnerships. Several strong cultural not-for-profits, such as the Walton Arts Center, the Texarkana Regional Arts and Humanities Council and DeltaARTS have the capacity to provide services beyond their local communities. It became obvious to the SP3 Team that the gaps needed to be filled from both directions.

Consequently, the SP3 initiative has focused on presenting 27 workshops (10 for music, 10 for visual arts, 7 for dance and theatre) around the state during



The AR SP3 agenda includes establishing a large state group of arts and arts education supporters from different regions with the capacity to plan and implement a statewide agenda to advance arts education [credit: University of Central Arkansas]



Connecting school and community resources for arts education locally throughout the state is a goal of the AR SP3 Team. [credit: Arkansas Repertory Theatre]

the summer of 2016 that will promote a model of professional development in which classroom teachers, teaching artists, and community arts groups work together. To reinforce the partnership concepts learned through these workshops, they will take place in studios, galleries and community arts spaces as well as schools; teachers, teaching artists and community arts professionals will co-present.

Additionally, the SP3 Team envisions establishing a regional infrastructure of eight centers statewide to develop arts education policies, implement them and deliver services. These are planned to be hosted in local arts agencies or colleges, each with an arts specialist leading development of a regional agenda. The upcoming summer workshops will serve as an opportunity for the SP3 Team to identify regional leaders for each of the eight

centers. A successful model for this infrastructure is the Arkansas STEM Coalition, which, over the course of two decades, has established 12 centers in colleges and universities around the state, each providing self-sustaining services to schools.

Since Arkansas is in the early process of both forming its new statewide arts advocacy organization – Arkansas for the Arts – and developing and implementing eight (8) regional arts education advocacy centers with effective leaders and respective action plans, initial SP3 activities include the following:

- Establish the infrastructure of central project director for advocacy organization and eight regional leaders as primary contacts;
- gather information from the field through regional infrastructure to: (a) gauge current status of arts education delivery, (b) determine topics of interest to the field, and (c) craft related messages;
- identify statewide education stakeholders and build relationships with them by eliciting areas of mutual interest;
- collaboratively establish the 8 regional centers with the purpose and capacity of each taking on a series of common tasks related to the implementation of the state arts education standards;
- develop a communications infrastructure for the regional centers; and,
- establish methods and mechanisms for tracking progress of the regional centers in achieving the goals of their action plans

SP3 resources from Americans for the Arts have proven critical to arts education progress in Arkansas, assisting in travel expenses for workshops, in the convening of task force supporters in each region, and in the foundational work of Arkansas for the Arts including communications and website design.

For more information and to participate in Arkansas SP3 activities, please contact:

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### Americans for the Arts' State Policy Pilot Program (SP3)

A three-year, 50-state initiative with a 10-state pilot component, the State Policy Pilot Program is meant to influence the implementation of federal mandates and programs around arts education at the state level, expand support for arts education policy and funding, and impact local access to arts programs and instruction for students. Through a set of data collection efforts, state-level capacity building, and the convening of a network for knowledge sharing and collective action, the State Policy Pilot Program will strengthen arts education nationally by improving state policy.

For more information, visit: [www.AmericansForTheArts.org/SP3](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/SP3).