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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**Arts and the Future of Education:** Report and Next Steps from the *National Overture of Education and the Arts in New Mexico*

A Program of the Institute for Education and the Arts

February 2005

### Background

*The National Overture of Education and the Arts in New Mexico*, developed by the Institute for Education and the Arts in cooperation with the Office of the Governor and the New Mexico Public Education Department, included over fifty demonstrations, seminars, roundtables, public discussions and clinics that took place in seven communities between February and May 2004.

The purposes of the *National Overture* program were to:

- Demonstrate the power of the arts to help teach core academic subjects across the spectrum from basic literacy to the most complex math and science
- Develop broad community awareness and support for this initiative to improve academic performance by all students
- Highlight the availability of existing talent and resources that can be used to implement this teaching approach promptly and efficiently in local schools
- Facilitate and coordinate the design of professional development opportunities for educators and arts specialists, leading to sustained actual use of this innovative approach

The participating communities, organizations and schools were chosen in response to interest expressed in developing more extensive integration of the arts across the K-12 curriculum, and in order to demonstrate the applicability of this teaching approach to rural as well as urban communities, and to students from Hispanic, Native American and Anglo cultural backgrounds.

### Observations and Need for Action

New Mexico has extraordinary cultural resources, multiple models of effective schools, and broad determination by business, civic and public officials to provide students with the highest quality of education. The fundamental challenges range from high drop-out and low literacy rates, to substantial cultural gaps, to a background sense of despair that often leads at the local level to more-of-the-same efforts while expecting different results. Competitiveness based on a perception of scarcity has impaired essential collaboration.

Improved education is an announced public priority, and increased state financing is being made available to local schools. Recent initiatives by the Governor, State administrative agencies and the legislature, as well as support from the private sector, provide both hope and resources for overcoming current challenges.

## Recommendations

Teaching *through* as well as about the arts engages students of all skill levels and from all economic and cultural backgrounds, and improves their academic performance.

We recommend the following steps:

- 1) Establishment of a Statewide Advisory Committee on teaching through the arts, representing:
  - a. Cultural and demographic diversity
  - b. State and local education leadership
  - c. Arts and cultural organizations
  - d. Business and economic development interests
  - e. Professional expertise, especially in math and science areas
  - f. Policy makers and public officials
- 2) Public Dialogues
  - a. Local, regional and statewide forums for regular and frequent public discussion of opportunities and concerns
  - b. Special individual and combined forums for educators, arts organizations, employers, cultural groups and others to raise and address in detail their key needs and interests
- 3) Professional Development on teaching through the arts
  - a. Translating theory into practice, on a sustained and routine basis
  - b. Primarily for educators, arts organizations and subject matter specialists
  - c. Supportive programs for business, civic and community leaders and public officials
  - d. Addressing achievement of academic standards through this process
  - e. Ensuring that implementation responds to local interests and needs

For more details about these observations and recommendations, please see the full “Report and Next Steps from the *National Overture of Education and the Arts in New Mexico*.”

For more information about the Institute for Education and the Arts, please see our website at [www.edartsinstitute.org](http://www.edartsinstitute.org).

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