

PANEL DISCUSSION

THE ROLE OF THE ARTS

IN EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Stark County District Library • Canton, Ohio

October 11, 2005

National Overture
Education *of* and the Arts
in Ohio
Stark County



INSTITUTE for EDUCATION and the ARTS
Education Alive!

Introduction

The following is a report on a panel discussion of local leaders in Stark County on the topic of The Role of the Arts in Effective Teaching and Learning, and the importance of the arts in every child's education, held at the Stark County District Library.

This panel discussion was the first of a series of events, open to the public, presented by the Institute for Education and the Arts, in collaboration with the Stark County Education Service Center, and the area cultural, civic and business organizations, held in Stark County, Ohio October 10-13, 2005.

The Institute for Education and the Arts promotes the effective and regular use of the arts to teach core academic subjects. Hosting and facilitating public dialogues on key questions of effective teaching and learning, and the role of integrated arts education in student achievement is central to the mission of IEA. The Institute will continue to support and encourage panel discussions, roundtable discussions and other public forums in communities across the country.

The arts enhance the quality and effectiveness of every child's learning process. Helping ensure that the arts become a regular, frequent and integrated aspect of every child's education, integrated into subjects across the academic curriculum, is a central element of the Institute's work.



Ronald F. Stowe
President
Institute for Education and the Arts



Donna Power Stowe
Vice President
Institute for Education and the Arts

For more information or to share your ideas, thoughts and new perspectives, contact us at info@edartsinstitute.org.

Sponsor

Institute for Education and the Arts
Ronald F. Stowe, President
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Host

Stark County District Library
Kent Oliver
Linda Dahl

Panel Moderator

Charita Goshay
Reporter, *Canton Repository*

Panelists

Myra Watkins
Third Grade Teacher, Allen Elementary School

Vince Watts
Executive Director, Coming Together Stark County

Betty Smith
Executive Director, Multi-Development Services Center of Stark County

Brennis Booth
Artist and Gallery Owner, 2ndApril Art Galerie

Rosalind Henderson
Principal, Allen Elementary School

Linda Dahl, Stark County District Library (LD): The Stark County District Library welcomes today's distinguished panelists Charita, Myra, Betty, Brennis and Vince, as well as Ron and Donna Power Stowe of the Institute for Education and the Arts. The Library believes that this program is important to the community. We are committed to supporting education in the arts - from the visual to the musical to the theatrical, not to mention the written word here at the Library. The artwork displayed throughout the Library was created by local artists. One example, the statue you passed as you came in the front doors of the Library, called "Enlightenment" is by a local artist, Don Lundstrom. We believe it is a perfect blending of the merged goals of arts in the library. We believe that art is important; we believe in the education of our children and we believe in Stark County. We're glad to host this portion of the Institute's *National Overture of Education and the Arts in Stark County* and welcome you to the library.

The importance of this panel is to hear from your local community members about the importance of the role of the arts in education.

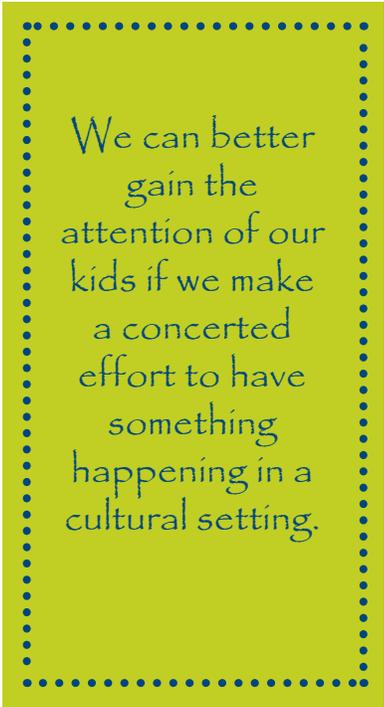
Donna Power Stowe, Institute for Education and the Arts (DS): This panel discussion is the first event of the *National Overture of Education in the Arts in Ohio - Stark County*, which will continue throughout this week. The Institute has been fortunate to have the assistance of the Stark County Educational Service Center, the Institute's local Advisory Board, as well as many other individuals and organizations throughout the County in putting this program together. I also want to thank the library very much for hosting us. The importance of this panel is to hear from your local community members about the importance of the role of the arts in education, the impact it has on children's learning, and how it helps children engage in their work.

This is what the Institute for Education in the Arts is all about. We work with communities, school districts, and states across the country to promote, reinforce and help bring together community forces for arts in education. Today we are starting to explore this topic with people in your community who have a range of perspectives and experiences to share.

The *National Overture* is an opening: a beginning of discussions and events that will lead to additional conversations and activities and hopefully long reaching and sustained efforts in support of arts integrated education as a regular part of every child's education from kindergarten through high school.

We are fortunate to have with us today, our distinguished moderator, Charita Goshay. Charita is columnist and reporter for the *Canton Repository* and brings with her a range of knowledge and experience to help guide today's conversation.

Charita Goshay, Panel Moderator (CG): Good morning and welcome to this community discussion on the role of arts in teaching and learning. I would like to introduce our panelists to you. Starting on my far left: Mr. Vincent Watts, the Executive Director of Coming Together Stark County; Mrs. Betty Smith, the Founder and Executive Director of Multi-Development Services Center of Stark County, an agency that provides a range of services for the County's residents; Mr. Brennis Booth, who is co-founder of 2nd April Galerie, an art gallery of primarily local artists in downtown Canton; and Ms. Myra Watkins, a third grade teacher at Allen Elementary School here in Canton and the founder and director/choreographer of the Alice African Dance Troupe, which has been performing as a group since 1990. Each panelist will share with us what they consider to be the important issues, benefits and challenges of teaching through and about the arts in K-12 education. A question and answer session will follow the panelists' presentations.



We can better gain the attention of our kids if we make a concerted effort to have something happening in a cultural setting.

Vincent Watts, Coming Together Stark County (VW): For me, growing up in this area [Canton, Ohio], we always had opportunity, especially during the summer months, to do things on a "lower stage" that kept us (as children) involved with the arts, that kept us interested, that gave us exposure to theatre art. Now that I'm a father and a grandfather I don't see that same level of exposure for our kids - through seeing the art as a painted work or a collection of pictures. My feeling is we can better gain the attention of our kids if we make a concerted effort to have something happening in a cultural setting. I think our kids are looking for a level of activity beyond the athletics (which are a major focus in Canton) - beyond the basketball and the football - in artistic ways - whether it's through the visual arts, through music or through dance that our kids feel connected again. My grandchildren will have an opportunity to gain an appreciation for the Symphony, for the Players' Guild and for all those entities in our community. That would be my goal.

Betty Smith, Multi-Development Services Center of Stark County (BS): I would just like to say that when I was in school this was part of our education; the arts were definitely a part. I can remember having music appreciation where we had to listen to classical music and where we had to identify the different instruments. That made us very familiar with the music and instruments, whether we wanted to or not. It was part of school so we had to learn it if we wanted to get the grade. We also had art classes where we had to learn about the very famous artists. That really helped, I feel, to mold and shape me because I really gained an appreciation for the arts.

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Brennis Booth, 2nd April Galerie (BB): Living in Canton, Ohio, we cannot and will not ignore the [Football] Hall of Fame. It is part of us and even helps, to a certain degree, to define us, not only internally but also externally. Everybody who drives down 77 knows exactly what that building represents and what it means to the city of Canton. So I'm not one of those artists who says, "enough football. "

But, once again, growing up here there really were not a lot of outlets beyond sports. And, let's face it. Canton is a blue-collar town. My father, though being a creative person, didn't exactly support my creative endeavors. I think he was a little afraid of what it all meant and would amount to meaning nothing in his eyes.

So I went into nursing – and I was absolutely miserable. It was the worst experience of my life, because I am not a caretaker or a caregiver.

The very first day that I sat in Introduction to Nursing, the woman looked at the class and she said there are certain of you that will make it and the rest of you won't - and she looked directly at me. Of course, I had a Mohawk and I wore a lot of black clothing as well. I felt as an artist I should. But anyhow, she was right.

In getting back to the educational aspect - I wish I would have been a little more diligent and followed through with my art. I feel at times that having had the encouragement and the actual programs available to me that were necessary to follow through with this path; I may have come out in a different place. But hindsight is twenty-twenty and you never regret, you can only move forward.

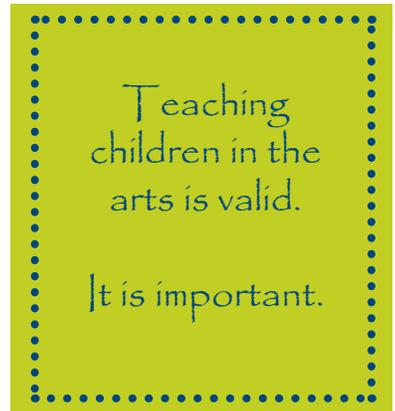
I moved back to Canton on a whim, opened up an art gallery and, believe it or not, my parents were the ones standing behind me 150%. They see the relevance and reality and the absolute importance that our gallery has in our community and our education, that teaching children in the arts is valid. It is important.

Myra Watkins, Allen Elementary School (MW): In a rainbow of colors in my family, I was the darkest and I had the largest features and I got teased about it a lot. I was told I looked like I was adopted, like I didn't fit in. I was also in the middle so often times I felt forgotten. You know I had very strong brothers and sisters ahead of me and very smart adorable sisters behind me, and here I was. I just didn't like myself. I didn't like how I looked. I didn't like who I was. I didn't really know who I was. I just knew I was a Black kid and I was the Blackest kid in my family and people didn't like me.

In school, I was kicked out for 110 days and sent to another school because they really didn't know what to do with me. Often times my teachers would tell me, "Basically, you are going to end up in jail. What are you going to do about this anger issue?" At Art Theatre there were many, many things that appealed to me, and my parents allowed me to go, because they had to find something to do with me. I was on my way to an institution until I was 21 if I got in trouble one more time.

So getting into this organization was excellent to me. I learned African dance. I learned how to play the Jamaican drum. I started sketching. But most of all, it taught me to be proud of my heritage and to be proud of who I was. I can't accomplish many things, but I can identify with a troubled child, with a child who doesn't excel on a test, with a child that doesn't fit in mainstream population. I can identify with a child who's from a broken home or from a poor home who's been taught and programmed that this is it for you.

I say all of that to say this: I understand how children learn. I understand why a part of me is still a child, a part of me is still that person that likes to see beauty in nature, who likes to look at a tree and see the cycle of life, who can look at a cloud and see how to teach math and science and social studies and language all in one created entity. The arts are what really saved my life.



Yes, I had adults who took me in and nurtured me and yes, I had good parents. But most of all I had the opportunity to rediscover myself through dance, through music, through drumming, through singing. Every single aspect of art is what I breathe. Before I went into education, I was a social worker for a long time. I decided later in life, like thirty-five, to go into education because I felt that while I was going to the schools with my African dance, I saw a need beyond that. The children really needed to identify academics with life and so that's why I entered into education.

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Being a third grade teacher has really been an excellent thing for me because I integrate the arts into everything I teach, into everything I do. We have an African dance troupe there, but it's based on doing your best in your classroom. It's not based on who is an A or B student, but when you arrive in school, and doing the best you can do. Are you returning your homework? Are you behaving? Are you following school policies? Are you being the best you can be? Then they can participate. If they are struggling sometimes they have to go an extended day instead of dance, but it is a part of our curriculum.

When I teach math we ingrain every aspect because learning is holistic. They have to write about it and we illustrate the concept. We apply every bit of art into what we do and the children love it. I find that when they have free time they are drawing and they are sketching. Every day we write our parents about what we learn. Not only do they write what they learn, they draw a picture. Now they all want little sketchpads to go with their little books. They really get into it. I get a lot of challenging students and I really want the children who are more challenging. I find that just like me, they start identifying and seeing their value, the purpose in the curriculum. It's a beautiful thing.

Rosalind Henderson, Allen Elementary (RH): Almost all of our lessons are arts integrated. We start off with the teachers developing and planning lessons.

MW: Even though a child may be cognitively delayed when it comes to math or any other subject, he can create. This is an example of a little boy who could barely write but look what he can do now through art. He can draw the concepts. He can label the concepts and he is going to have a wonderful year with me.

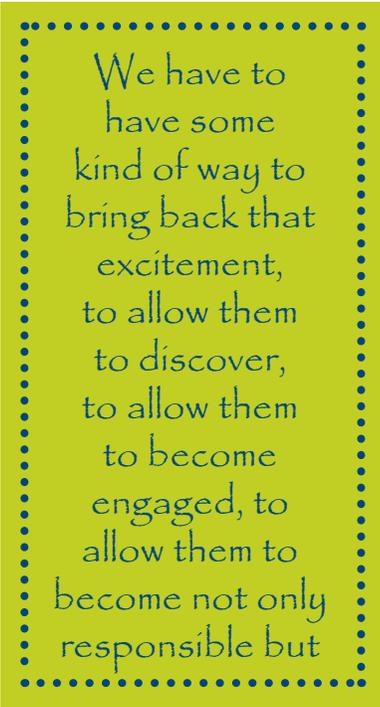
I try to find out what I can do better to help that student because I don't want him to fall through the cracks. I don't want him to graduate being passed along not really knowing what he can do.

We need to do more when it comes down to art. We need to really look at the curriculum and this test-driven society and think about what is really being tested. Let me test them on what they should know. I think there are things that we can change. Our children are becoming immune. They really don't care. We have to have some kind of way to bring back that excitement, to allow them to discover, to allow them to become engaged, to allow them to become not only responsible, but also excited about their own educational progress.

In the African Dance Troupe, not only do I teach them about the goatskin on the drum, how to heat the skin and the tree for the drum base, I also teach them how to drum.

RH: We integrate lessons in every classroom from pre-K through 6th grade. The reason why we integrate all modalities is because a student may not get it when he or she hears it. She may not get it when she sees it. But if he does it, he gets it. If a teacher creates all those different modalities, if a teacher adds art, think about how much more engaging and meaningful school would be. That is what we do at Allen School.

VW: Being a child of the 70's and when busing was still in its heyday, I got to see the difference between what is taught in many of our inner city schools, and some of those that are considered our best schools. If you look at the curriculum of some of our "best schools," they integrate the arts. That's where I first learned to quote Shakespeare and learned how to quote Edgar Allen Poe - because we had to do it. It was integrated into what we did every day. When I came back to my neighborhood, the kids that were there had never heard of the things that we were learning every day. Those other schools found out that if you could tap into the creative insides of a kid you can get them interested in what is being said and what is being taught.



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I think our problem right now is that we have become so, as Myra put it, test-driven and test-focused. We have got to teach to that student and not teach to the test. So in answer to the question - absolutely we ought to integrate arts in our everyday classrooms. Our algebra teacher should be teaching through art. In history, I remember I learned about the Civil War by creating a Battle of Gettysburg display, and having to explain what each part of that meant and why it was significant. I still know that display today because I had to do it, and not just read about it. If we do that I think I think we will have a lot better proficiency test scores and better outcomes for our kids.

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BB: A couple days before coming here I went online. Of course, whenever I need information or whenever I need back up for the things that I feel and the things I say, I always go online to try to find somebody on there who feels the same things that I feel or is going through the same processes that I am going through. On the New Horizons for Learning website there is an article stating that many parents feel the study of fine and performing arts is nice thing for their children, as a kind of finishing touch. One of the points made is that the best way to learn anything is to do it. Often in schools, students are not allowed to actually do anything. They learn about doing something or watch someone else do it. The young musician learns by playing the violin, not listening to someone lecture about it. I believe that I've created an environment for children where they are actually up moving around and dancing. This isn't for everyone, but I do believe that there are teachers, we thank you very much for being those types of teacher that actually do it, that use the arts to help students learn and make them part of the class.

MW: I feel the arts should be a part of our curriculum. I am one for using chants to help elementary children learn. That's how I teach multiplication. I just feel that it makes life so much more enjoyable for everyone involved when children are excited about what they are going to do, to the point that they can't wait to come back to school. When you get that kind of positive energy, life is so much better. Our boys especially like to create rhythms and rap and make rhymes. When you teach word families, I automatically teach math families, but then the next thing you know they are creating songs for me that they perform for the class. I just think it becomes a wonderful place of harmony in the classroom.

BS: Charita, could I just share a little something? I had to change one boy's school four times. He was just disruptive and teachers really couldn't do anything about that. They said, well he's bright; he does pretty well; he's just very disruptive in school. I just didn't know what to do. I finally put him into a school where he could do something with the arts. He was a gifted writer. The teacher gave him a pen and said, "This is where I want you to create." He wrote a paper about basketball and I chastised him because I thought he copied out of a book. The teacher said, "I watched him do that. He is creative." Then he began to write plays and this is what really got him through. After four schools, it was the arts that actually brought him around, and then he was able to concentrate on other things in school.

MW: We want our children to think analytically, make inferences and be creative thinkers. But if we are not teaching them how to think, how to create, how can they become that? The only way they can create and learn and imagine is to take them there and allow them to experience that. We have to get back to allowing them to be children and imagine and play and all the things that have been taken away from them because they are growing up too fast.

CG: What can communities do to support arts in education? Should they go to school boards and demand that this be added to the curriculum or sponsor the school's show or play...what can the community do?

MW: First of all we need to make sure we have the appropriate people bringing in the arts. So, first and foremost, we need to make sure that whoever comes to teach understands the culture of the children. Once you understand, you can teach them anything. I know money is important but money should not stop our children from learning. If we are teaching our children creatively and to be creative, some of this money won't go out to social services. We are dealing with behavioral issues because our children are bored. We'll put money into jails and we will put money into all these other things, but when it comes down to our children, we will cut funds in a minute. We need to understand our children are valuable. They're our future. As a community we do need to start demanding more for our children.

We want our children to think analytically, make inferences, and be creative thinkers. But if we are not teaching them how to think, how to create, how can they become that?

VW: I don't think that we can just sit back and say, "You know, schools, you ought to integrate arts into education." We should be there to help support that. So parents can suggest a play or maybe direct a play or help with part of a program after school. And a lot more people, including the arts community itself, have to step up and be a little more responsible. Why can't the Players' Guild do an elementary school play, even if it's *The Three Little Pigs*, on their main stage just to give the kids an opportunity to walk out on stage and deliver a line and walk off? What ever happened to the Thanksgiving Pageant

at the school? We've got to get back to the point where more people are involved in this process. We have to become more of an advocate for arts in the community. We have got to become more creative as parents, and the arts community has to be more creative in its offerings to the community. Then we get more resources for the teachers to reach out to and none of that involves more funding.

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BS: I think what's happening too is that social service agencies and after school programs are picking up the slack for schools. We are incorporating all the arts into our programs because we are finding out it does help people. The schools should have more of this. Of course funding is an issue with everybody, but we know that this is what keeps the young people coming and involved and we don't have behavior problems when we are involved in the arts.

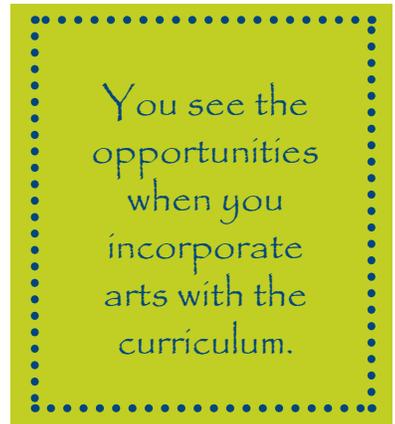
BB: I don't know exactly who said this but the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and over again but expecting different results. I believe that's the kind of the approach that we need to take with the schools. Why are we doing the same things over and over and over again and still expecting different results with the schools?

The art gallery that I am affiliated with decided to start art education courses for after school and summer program kids. We took two groups of kids to be part of a pilot art program this year to see how it would work. It was a lot of work but a great experience. I had applied for a grant for the program, but unfortunately that grant did not come through and at first I was like, "Well, what am I going to do?" Then I stopped and I said, "I am not going to allow a few dollars to validate my experience. We are going to do

this program.” We brought in crayons, pencils, and paints, so on and so forth for these kids to work with. It wasn’t a lot, but it was a beginning and these kids had a great time. No, it wasn’t a regimented program like I had hoped it to be, and I wasn’t able to bring in the instructors that I had hoped to bring in, in order to do this. But it was a success nonetheless. I think I am an idealistic person and we can’t allow dollars and cents to stand in the way. Creativity is free; it is free, you either have it or you don’t, and if you have it then take it and pass it on.

CG: Does anyone in the audience have any questions or comments?

First Audience Member: One of our most successful programs here at the Library is called the Little Theatre Troupe. The Library provides the staff and we have the Little Theatre Troupe, which are the families who have children involved and they provide a lot of the support. We started out with about 20 or 25 children that would try out for the play and everybody got a part. We are now up to 75 children who try out for the play and still everybody gets a part. It teaches self-esteem. It teaches confidence. It teaches a love for acting in the theatre. This is the type of program that we’ve seen that people are clamoring for in the community and obviously they are not able to get in other places. It shows the importance of the arts and the role we can play in the community if we get creative.



Second Audience Member: I have three children that went through the Pleasant View School of the Arts. It’s incredible the creativity seen in that school. One daughter is studying writing in college. My second daughter is a music major at Dayton School of Music. You see the opportunities when you incorporate the arts with the curriculum and you can just take off and go with it. It would be nice to see that in the whole Stark County community.

VW: As an employer, I can teach the facts [to my employees]. I need people who can take those facts and use them creatively. I can teach you to do the job, but, I can’t teach you to think independently. What we are teaching our kids is how to follow the rules, how to think according to what the previous generation thought. Yet business is saying we don’t need that. Business needs creative people. Remember Richard Florida’s *The Rise of the Creative Class*? We need people who can think creatively and think outside of the box, who can take the same set of information and do something different with it.

I was with AJ Albacete at the Canton Art Museum yesterday and he took some punched out pieces of paper and made a geometric form. Then he added those forms together to form something else. All of that is art and creativity. If we take art out of the schools, or if we fail to encourage the arts in schools, what we are going to get is a generation of students who then become adults who will be great at *Jeopardy*, but they can't solve the problems that businesses are facing.

We need people who can think creatively and think outside of the box, who can take the same set of information and do something different with it.

We've got to find some creative people and that has to start in the educational system. So it isn't just art for education's sake; it's art for life's sake. It's art for business' sake, it's art for our community's sake. So when I say the community has to take this on that's not just being flip. I'm saying if our community, especially this community of Stark County, is in trouble right now because we have a lack of creative thinking at the top to solve the problems that we are experiencing as a community. If we get creative people in leadership, I think we can think our way back to the top, but we need creative people.

BB: Why don't we [on this panel] know each other? This is my first time meeting Charita. I think the thing about it is, it's about communication. It's opening up the doors and stepping outside of our own work communities. I am so tired of going to meetings where we are going to solve the world's problems but it's the same people over and over and over again. I think the thing is we need to strive towards greater links in communications - like getting the artists to get to know the educators, and the educators to know the artists. I think that's right now where we stand, listening to all of us. That's the one thing that's key.

BS: I agree. Communication and teamwork and everything. We don't need a lot of people to get things started. I think sometimes we should start it on a smaller scale, and sometimes it is better that way. And I think with just the few of us who are here in this room we can make a difference, make an impact and just get involved with other people. I am really concerned about our children. We must embrace our young people so that we don't have so many disciplinary problems, too many of our young people are going to detention homes and to jail and end up in prison and if we have to start where we are so whatever it takes to make it happen, I'm all for it.

VW: I would say our next step should be to make some disciples, find some artists and some teachers who are willing. Get four, five, six success stories, at the elementary, at the middle school, at the high school and create some disciples that this really does work. I think right now we talk in terms of theory and people understand the theory but get lost in the applications. So let's find some successes, let's put in a program. Let's pair artists with teachers. Let's see if it works and once it works, let's advertise the heck out of it. We've got to find some successes that we can document, that help us to tell our story, without that it's just theory.

Ron Stowe, Institute for Education and the Arts (RS): I would like to point out that you have a lot of brilliant ideas being discussed in the front of the room here. There are two people in this room who are your strongest advocates and who are very powerful in their own personal beliefs and in what they've done. First you heard briefly from Bruce Berry, who for the last week has been running some spots on his radio station, speaking with enthusiasm and personal conviction, and reaching a lot of people. We are going to keep reaching them because this video and the transcripts from the audio will help you share these ideas. And second, one of the most inspirational people of all in this room is Mel Lioi from the Stark County Educational Service Center. Mel believes in the power of the arts to engage students and to improve their academic performance. She believed it before we came to town. She is on the case and she has worked with the superintendents, the principals, the teachers and ultimately, the students across this county. There are people here who are listening and working to accomplish the very goals you are aspiring to.

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The Institute for Education and the Arts aims to broaden the awareness, understanding, and support for teaching through and about the arts to help all children in grades K-12 engage effectively in their learning and to improve achievement in all core subjects.

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**Marathon
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