

PREFACE

In 2002, Los Angeles County embarked on an initiative as ambitious as it was comprehensive. The goal of *Arts for All: Los Angeles County Regional Blueprint for Arts Education* was to restore quality, sequential arts education to all of the County's 81 school districts. The initiative garnered broad and deep commitment and has made significant progress. Today, 34 of the 81 school districts are working toward the goals of *Arts for All* and more than 100 community partners are engaged in helping to move the initiative forward.

The true test of *Arts for All*, however, lies in what is happening in the classroom. How does policy become reality for students, teachers and administrators? The Los Angeles County Arts Commission, which leads *Arts for All*, commissioned this study about the first 11 school districts to commit to the initiative's goals. We wanted to find out how much progress had been made, identify the barriers to reaching goals and how technical assistance could best be used to effect implementation.

This study was originally intended as an internal document but the findings are so compelling we felt it was important to share our lessons with the broader education community. Its publication is especially timely in light of the findings of the recently released National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) in the Arts report that arts education in America is "mediocre" and "lackluster." As U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said, the report "should challenge all of us to make K-12 arts program more available to America's children."

Arts for All: The Vanguard Districts – Case Studies from the First Five Years fills a gap in our knowledge about arts education efforts. **There is a robust and rigorous body of research on the impact of arts education on students but there is sparse research on the effective strategies for implementing, sustaining and stewarding arts education efforts.** Not since Arts Education Partnership's (AEP) *Gaining the Arts Advantage* (1999) has there been a comprehensive study of how school districts animate the arts in their schools. We believe these case studies and subsequent cross-case analyses offer new insights about the differences between planning to restore arts education and making that plan a reality.

In reading this report, bear in mind that the study captures a moment in time, a snapshot of a massive work in progress that seeks to effect long-term change. Since these case studies were conducted in 2008, the economic climate in Los Angeles and California has changed dramatically as it has everywhere, but *Arts for All* has faced many challenges in its history. Fortunately, the initiative recently received a \$1.2 million grant from The Wallace Foundation to develop programs and strategies to deepen and strengthen the capacity of 28 *Arts for All* districts to fully implement their arts education plans. Because of the findings of these case studies, *Arts for All* is in a better position to provide more targeted professional development and technical assistance to all our school districts. Stay tuned.

Arts for All Executive Committee

Danielle Brazell, *Executive Director, Arts for LA*
Betty Haagen, *Commissioner, Los Angeles County Arts Commission*
Janice Pober, *Senior Vice President, Corporate Social Responsibility, Sony Pictures Entertainment*
Dr. Darline P. Robles, *Superintendent, Los Angeles County Office of Education*
Laurie Schell, *Executive Director, California Alliance for Arts Education*
Mark Slavkin, *Vice President of Education, Music Center*
Gail Tierney, *Senior Deputy to Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman of the Board*
Laura Zucker, *Executive Director, Los Angeles County Arts Commission*

September 2009