

***Arts Survive!: A Study of Sustainability in Arts Education Partnerships
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Executive Summary

Many arts education partnerships are initiated, but far too few survive beyond initial funding. Arts Survive, conducted by researchers at Harvard Project Zero with support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, is a study of arts education partnerships that have survived or show promise of surviving beyond initial funding. This report describes the challenges of building the capacity to survive and thrive in an arts education partnership, how a number of partnerships have met these challenges, and some lessons drawn from the collective experiences of the partnerships in the study.

For the purposes of this study, an art education partnership was defined as a collaborative educational effort between a school or school district and professional artists or arts organizations to provide in-depth arts experiences for children. An extensive nomination and selection process was conducted. Over 200 arts education partnerships were nominated and 100 applied for inclusion in the study. Twenty-one were chosen for study, covering a variety of geographic locations, and a range of student populations, from rural areas in Montana and California, to Chicano communities in new Mexico and Chicago, to juvenile offenders in Seattle, to multicultural urban settings in new York City.

FIVE MAJOR FINDINGS EMERGED FROM THIS STUDY:

1. Surviving partnerships place the needs of students and schools at the center of their mission. In surviving partnerships, benefits for students and the needs of teachers and schools are at the core of the design, implementation, and spirit of the partnerships' programs. Partnerships have many purposes and participants—some with competing needs and interests. Clarity about the primacy of student learning is a hallmark of partnerships that survive.

2. Deep personal commitments to the educational power of arts experiences fuel surviving partnerships. Arts education partnerships are created and sustained by people for whom the goal of bringing children in direct contact with art, artists, and art-making is a driving, often life-long, commitment. These people have a deep and passionate belief in the value of the arts in their own lives, children's lives, and the lives of their communities.

3. In surviving partnerships, multiple dimensions of the work receive regular attention. Sustaining arts education partnerships is enormously complex work that demands simultaneous attention to a multitude of needs and challenges. Partnerships that survive and thrive find ways to regularly and substantively attend to various elements of the partnership. Surviving partnerships pay constant and careful attention to:

- building and maintaining strong relationships between people, organizations, initiatives;
- clarifying values and negotiating goals among partners;
- developing strong leadership and a clear locus of decision-making;
- securing adequate funding and resources;
- educating and advocating for the partnership broadly and constantly;
- maintaining and improving the quality and design of the educational program;
- making the work of the partnership visible through documentation, evaluation, and assessment.

4. Surviving partnerships embrace the need to listen, to learn and to change. Arts education partnerships must evolve and grow (though not necessarily in size) over time in order to survive. To this end, those involved in a partnership, especially those in key roles, must listen well, have an active interest in learning, and a willingness to change themselves and their programs. In addition, the history and growth of the partnership must be known, honored, and respected, even, or especially, while changes take place.

5. Surviving partnerships require a broad base of ownership and investment. In surviving partnerships, systematic and concerted efforts are made to cultivate investment and ownership of the partnership in people beyond the initiators and primary leaders. In particular, it is essential that those most directly involved in implementing partnership activities—teachers, artists, parents, administrators—have a strong sense of involvement and control. The broader the feeling of ownership in partnership activities, the more likely there will be adequate support through times of challenge and crisis.

Download the complete study from the [Harvard Project Zero Website](#).