



fund arts education.<sup>2</sup> Supporting and improving art programs in inner city schools will provide access to the new Creative economy for those who are currently held back by a cycle of poverty while simultaneously benefiting urban communities and nation both socially and economically.

### **The Creative Economy:**

*“Happiness is not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort”*

*-Teddy Roosevelt*

*“The American Art industry, both the commercial and nonprofit performing arts are an economic enterprise that is more lucrative than sports, in fact the net output of arts industry is the second largest net export after defense projects.”*

*-Charles Fowler, Strong Arts Strong Schools*

The developing Creative economy categorizes today’s predominant forces of production: creative and mental labor.<sup>3</sup> It is the result of changing forces in production

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2 K.R. Woodworth, *An Unfinished Canvas, Arts Education in California: Taking Stock of Policies and Practices*, (Menlo Park, CA: SRI International)14.

3 Richard Lloyd, *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Post-Industrial City*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 244.



these new forms of production. Post-war Fordism<sup>7</sup> and the technology-driven new economy of the 1990's did not ensure uninterrupted growth as was anticipated. Instead, global influences and accompanying capital reorganization have increased the economic divide between rich and poor, especially visible in the inner city. The Creative economy in fact has exacerbated this divide.<sup>8</sup> New transportation options, communication technologies, political strategies, and modes of organization have all increased the mobility of capital and been the cause of this disorder.<sup>9</sup> For the inner city, white flight and deindustrialization accompanied this transformation and made its repercussions especially severe for the cities' working class that was left behind. Additionally, new patterns of production in culture and technology influence new forms of redevelopment, often white-collar residential gentrification that displaces the low-income and minorities that are financially and politically unable to resist. Consequently it is the poor and minorities that bear the brunt of these changing social and economic forces.

**School in the context of Creative Economy:**

*“Children in one set of schools are educated to be governors; children in the other set of schools are trained for being governed. The former are given the imaginative range to*

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<sup>7</sup> Fordism: the economic philosophy where success and corporate profits can be gained

*mobilize ideas for economic growth; the latter are provided with the discipline to do the narrow tasks the first group will prescribe.”*

*-Jonathan Kozol Savage Inequalities*

*“As we struggle to find solutions to an increasingly complex array of thorny social problems the arts, only one of many public goods, must compete for both financial resources and the public’s attention with an ever-increasing array of other social needs.”*

*-Kevin F. McCarthy The Performing Arts in a New Era*

Reflecting the cities they are in, public schools in urban areas are increasingly segregated by race and social class. In fact, our public education system has reached a crises point where one in three public schools is “high-poverty” as determined by half or more of students who accept free or reduced priced lunch.<sup>10</sup> Funding for public education has undergone a significant shift resulting in its ultimate bifurcation. An increasingly large gap now exists, resulting in a considerable disparity between the qualities of programs at urban-based public schools versus suburban ones.<sup>11</sup> The repercussions of this void are made worse by how this money is spent. The arts, effective means by which to acquire human and creative capital for upward mobility, often are left out of schools’ curricula when funds are lacking. For schools in low-income communities, funds are spent predominantly on construction and renovation, as in “basic repairs, such as new

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10 Carolina Reid, *Back to School: Prioritizing Education in Community Development Efforts* (Fall 2007).  
[www.frbsf.org/publications/community/investments/0709/back\\_to\\_school.pdf](http://www.frbsf.org/publications/community/investments/0709/back_to_school.pdf)

11 Reid, 3.

roofs or asbestos removal.”<sup>12</sup> Yet, more affluent schools possess the funds for projects considered amenities in the eyes of low-income public schools, such as science labs or performing arts centers.<sup>13</sup>

In this land of supposed ‘equal opportunity’, there has been an understanding in the U.S. that education is the social leveler which provides all citizens the ability to realize the American Dream.<sup>14</sup> While the U.S. constitution does not mention education explicitly at all, every state’s constitution guarantees its citizens a right to education.<sup>15</sup> This fact is mirrored in the funding of public schools, where 92 percent of school costs on average are funded through state/local expenditures, versus the 8 percent footed by the Federal Government. While the Federal government does not devote a large share of its budget to public education this is not to suggest it plays a minimal role in the quality, and nature of public education in the United States.

In fact the Federal government’s role in and influence on public education has grown dramatically in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and directly influenced existing inequalities. The perception of public education as a necessary ‘social equalizer’ began soon after the Civil War, with the Freedmen’s Bureau. Instituted to improve the educational opportunity for emancipated slaves, the Bureau initiated an educational precedent for the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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12 Reid, 4.

13 Reid, 4.

14 David Trend, *Cultural Pedagogy: Art/Education/Politics* (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1992), 42

15 John Backman, Federal Education Policy and the States, 1945-2004: A Brief Synopsis: States’ Impact on Federal Education Policy Project (Albany: New York State Archives, Jan. 2006), [http://www.archives.nysed.gov/edpolicy/research/res\\_essay\\_intro\\_fedrole.shtml](http://www.archives.nysed.gov/edpolicy/research/res_essay_intro_fedrole.shtml)

The Federal Government made clear it would one: offer federal aid to raise the educational level of the disadvantaged members of society, two: promote the economic interests of the nation through the expansion of access to learning, and three: work towards the assimilation of new citizens into society in order to foster productive labor as well as social harmony.<sup>16</sup> Soon after, the Federal Government demonstrated its resolve to involve itself directly in fulfilling these three goals. Initially the precedent was reinforced by the institution in 1867 of the Office of Education (now the Department of Education) to make sure these goals were met. Further government involvement is epitomized in the Agricultural Adjustment Act<sup>17</sup>, the enforcement of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1958), and the National Defense Education Act in 1958<sup>18</sup>, all of which reiterated the principle that public education is a tool for social equity and economic advancement. However in the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and for the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup>, there has been a significant reversal in the relationship between the Federal Government and public education.<sup>19</sup>

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16 Backman.

17 Agricultural Adjustment Act (P.L 74-320): authorized the Department of Agriculture to purchase surplus food for distribution to non-profit school lunch programs. Also subsequent amendments in 1940 and 1946 included a school milk program and the consolidation of food-commodity laws to provide free meals to low-income children, (the National School Lunch Act).

18 National Defense Education Act (NDEA): allocated an unprecedented amount of funds to public schools, influenced by pressures to outdo the Soviet Union in national defense and international economic competition.

19 Gilberto Arriaza, Susan Roberta Katz, and Emma Fuentes, "Waging war over public education and youth services: challenging corporate control of our schools and communities," *Social Justice* (September 22, 2005), <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-148574793.html>



While the NCLB was sponsored as a means to promote equity in our nation's schools the law itself, the administration's unwillingness to fund it as promised and the uneven management by the U.S. Department of Education have instead inflicted more harm than good.<sup>23</sup> In the name of "accountability" schools are now subject to standardized tests in order to determine whether it meets NCLB standards. However the NCBL offers little financial aid for its provisions to be met while mandating 100% control over state education budgets. In 2005 the National Education Association estimated that the nation's schools were given \$9.8 billion less than guaranteed and less than \$12 billion in 2006. Indeed, in fiscal year 2005, Illinois estimated that almost 80 percent of the states school districts were in severe budgetary deficits and Illinois is no exception. Meanwhile the role of arts education has taken a back seat in the push to raise standards, focus schools on academic fundamentals, and narrow the achievement gap.<sup>24</sup> In this financial crisis, schools are forced to teach quantifiable curriculum and eliminate "soft courses" such as Social Studies and arts programs.<sup>25</sup> The arts have been thought of

Seen as expendable, art programs in less fortunate public schools are being cutback, as proficient funds are consistently lacking. In a statewide school survey for California, conducted in 2005-2006 by the Stanford Research Institute, a key finding was that students attending high-poverty schools have much less access to arts instruction than their peers in more affluent communities. Additionally, they stated that a lack of funding for education is a top barrier to the provision of arts education, and a need for other outside funding from sources such as parent groups, creates inequities.<sup>27</sup> The study reiterated the fact that pressure to improve test scores in other content areas drove funding away from arts programs.

When contrasted to “arts rich” schools, this inequity is much more stunning. Based on a study of over 2000 pupils attending public schools in grades four through eight, researchers from the Teachers College Columbia University found that students in these schools scored higher in creativity-imagination, expression, cooperative learning, risk-taking, and measures of academic self-concept than students in “arts-poor” schools. In addition, for the schools with strong arts programs both teachers and principles conveyed that the arts allowed teachers to be more imaginative, to have a better understanding of students’ abilities, and a greater fulfillment from work.<sup>28</sup> Because of Federal policies, 71 percent of the nation’s 15,000 school districts have had to reduce the hours of instructional time spent on history, music, and other arts<sup>29</sup>, a trend that has

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27 Woodworth, 4.

28 J.M. Burton, R. Horowitz, & H. Abeles, “Learning in and through the arts: The question of transfer,” *Studies in Arts Education*, (2000, 41, 3), 228-275.

29 Sam Dillon, “Schools Cut Back Subj

specifically hurt poor schools in urban communities where spending per pupil is statistically the lowest<sup>30</sup> and student racial compositions are predominantly minority.

But are these trends really worrisome? By requiring schools to meet standards and pressuring schools to meet rising benchmarks haven't we established the necessary accountability for our nation's failing public schools? When put into the context of the growing socioeconomic disparities in this country and the Creative economy we now live in, a well-rounded curriculum is imperative to ensure equal opportunity for all citizens. Richard Florida states that in order to build the creative community, "human capital is the most important investment a country makes" and furthermore this should entail "full arts and culture funding." Florida distinguishes the difference between public education during the industrial era, where "rote memorization"<sup>31</sup> was emphasized, versus now where our society needs "comprehensive education" one that stretches from "aesthetics to algebra" without believing that these two are exclusive.<sup>32</sup> These current trends in public education are a microcosm of increasing disparity between upper and lower, minority and majority classes in American society. The confluence between these two facts, increasingly poorer schools in increasingly poorer/minority neighborhoods and the cuts in arts education because of lack of funds aggravates the lack of opportunity for equality and upward mobility that is theoretically guaranteed in this Democratic nation.

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30 Reid, 5.

31 Rote Memorization: a type of learning that focuses on memorization, involved in rote learning is learning by repetition. The idea is that one will be able to absorb and utilize the meaning of the material the more one repeats it. It has been criticized for being a method that does not allow for in-depth understanding.

32 Florida, *The Flight of the Creative Class*, 255.

## **The Individual:**

*“We must recognize the fact that every single human being is creative”*

*-Richard Florida The Flight of the Creative Class*

Today’s creative age has the possibility for much greater human potential, allowing Americans to engage in their creative faculties for financial gain.<sup>33</sup> But when one grows up poor in this country one will struggle to escape this demographic. Carolina Reid, an outspoken advocate for prioritizing education in community redevelopment efforts, puts it aptly: “The consequences of growing up poor are far reaching, affecting access to prenatal care, birth weight, and immunizations; behavioral problems; juvenile delinquency, drug and alcohol use, and teenage pregnancy, to name just a few. These alcohol us

broadcasting, art and sculpture, their counterparts in the inner city are more often placed in vocational courses that serve the industrial economy of the past by training for service and industrial labor. Given little or no hope in school, inner-city youth frequently drop out, having negative consequences not only for the individual but the community as well. It is not surprising that in schools with minority students comprising ninety percent, there is a forty-two percent graduation rate. Compar

peer associations, less interest in drugs, more resistance to peer pressure, and reduced criminal activity. Within the academic sphere, the benefits entail: improved math ability, improved reading comprehension, improved language skills, increased interest in social studies, improved spatial-temporal reasoning, and an increase in high school graduation rates.







environments outside of school have less college educated individuals and provide fewer expectations for academic success.<sup>47</sup> So how then can schools and arts education facilitate progress in these discouraging conditions? Is it sensible to prioritize school reform when the neighborhoods around them struggle and deteriorate?

Just as schools cannot single-handedly tackle the complexity of challenges their students face, urban communities cannot ignore the integral role schools serve in the wellbeing and livelihood of the neighborhood. In the last thirty to forty years however, schools and neighborhood revitalization have rarely been linked. Mark Warren, Associate Professor of Education at Harvard University, contends there in fact needs to be collaboration between schools and community development efforts for quality education and lasting ne

communities.<sup>49</sup> What is needed then, Warren asserts, is ways to link school reform and community development efforts.

Restoring the arts is one viable strategy available to bond schools and the community in a mutually beneficial relationship. Through the arts, schools and community development efforts can work jointly towards neighborhood improvement and capitalize on the benefits of a collaborative approach.<sup>50</sup> In an interview on linking community development and school improvement, Professor Warren identifies in what way these collaborative approaches between schools and the community can form. The arts in particular can facilitate this collaboration in three significant ways. One facet entails getting more people personally engaged in the school. Another level involves creating meaningful collaborations between families and schools. Last but not least the arts can promote the school as an institutional partner where its services are used as “a starting point for building relationships with the school and the wider community.”<sup>51</sup>

how arts can be a link between the school and its community and what effect this can have. However, the report

new networks- between parents and families, artists, arts organizations, businesses, local civic and cultural leaders, and institutions – all of which capitalized and expanded upon the social capital found in schools. In linking schools to the community, Professor Warren asserts the key is to start by reaching out and attempting to collaborate with the institutions that already exist within the community. This potential for new networks can compensate for the lack of human and financial capital in urban communities by enhancing and broadening the social, civic, and cultural connections of students and the general community.

Further connecting schools and the community in mutually beneficial s

more opportunities for building relationships important to the school and district. These meaningful relationships between families and schools represent indigenous efforts to build social capital and relationships while functioning also to empower people through personal ownership of the reforms.

While the specific characteristics of these networks and the community consensus that is reached varied in response to local contexts (Vancouver and Washington differ in specific detail from Miami and Florida, for example), in all cases the report listed three central ways the arts dramatically improved the schools themselves. Strong arts improve the school climate: with a coherent and strong arts programs schools look, sound, and feel different because schools became more attractive, warm, welcoming, and visually exciting. Secondly, the art's comprehensive tasks challenge students: producing a play, performing a concert or dance recital, these examples and others have students using many artistic skills, directing aesthetic and expressive qualities for set purposes, and working with human behaviors and emotions in a variety of ways. Students are actually *willing* to discipline themselves or undertake rigorous practice and rehearsal sessions. Finally, the arts turn schools into communities. These schools became more supportive, more like families, encouraging students and teachers to work together, to create things together, perform together, or display results of their efforts together.

The impact of school arts programs on the economy of the communities is off-handedly considered negligible,<sup>53</sup> but utilizing public schools as integral parts of an arts-involved strategy for community revitalization has apparent value. In one regard, improved school environments and integrated community networks will curb the effect

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53 Guetzkow.

extraordinary dropout rates in urban public schools has on their neighborhoods. In a recent article in the Los Angeles Times entitled “Back to Basics: Why does High School Fail so Many?”, they found that dropouts from Birmingham High School, a typical Los Angeles high school, will cost the county hundreds of millions of dollars a year in lost income taxes and increased welfare and healthcare costs. In another regard, high quality schools have a major influence on housing values: families seeking first rate education will pay premiums on housing costs/property taxes.<sup>54</sup> The demonstrated effects of strong arts programs to improve the schools can attract middle or upper class back to city, bringing more revenue with them. Additionally, economically integrated schools bring other benefits academically, regardless of individual socio-economic status.<sup>55</sup> The aggregation of deleterious factors in communities and their schools impart a self-confirming identity of inequality<sup>56</sup> but the arts are a unique avenue by which the school and a greater segment of the community can come together to address socio-economic inequality through comprehensive community development.

### **A Case Study: Vancouver (WA)**

The case of Vancouver, Washington, exemplifies the once thriving city that now faces budget crises and the complicated decisions of how to spend limited funds. At one

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54 Drier, Mollenkopf & Swanstrom, 209.

55 Alan Finder, *As Test Scores Jump, Raleigh Credits Integration by Income*, The New York Times, September 25, 2005.

56 Rosie Meade and Mae Shaw, “Editorial Community development and the arts: reviving the democratic imagination,” *Community Development Journal* (Vol. 42, #4, 2007), 6.

point a thriving ship-building center, beginning around 1989 manufacturing plants began closing and soon 15,000 high-wage, primarily union jobs, vanished. Consequently family incomes dropped dramatically, to a point where the average household's income loss (real, not adjusted) was \$5,000 over the last decade's income. The number of students using free and reduced lunch rose from 12 to 49 percent. Facing hard times, the Vancouver school district also had to cope with 27 older school buildings in desperate need of repair. Almost accidentally, it was this need for facility rehabilitation that was the catalyst for educational reform and the formation of school community partnerships.

Deliberating over how to approach repairing their facilities, the school board challenged the school districts superintendent to come up with a strategic plan, one for

bricks and mortar". The superintendent's

Vancouver and by doing so, the superintendent

them. Initially using a 'steering group' of

, students, some faculty, a few board

became a series of town meetings. Public

integrated curriculum but also rehabilitate existing facilities the school began community outreach through educators, parents, and the students in order to build support for two key bond measures. Despite only 26 percent of the voters having school-aged children, their personal stories of depleted arts programs and school resource shortages built a community vision and produced shared goals that enabled the passing of the bond measures. Furthermore, to fully reach and sustain their goals it was also deemed necessary to seek out and engage organizations and individuals of “substantial means”. In this regard, arts proved a supplemental and effective means to establish these lasting relationships. The locally based corporation and largest employer in Clark county, Hewlett-Packard, got onboard with a Community Action Plan that included a K-12 Education and Arts and Culture Program. Hewlett- Packard executives embraced the proposed interdisciplinary approach that promoted creativity remarking “that’s what we want because that’s the way our employees work”. Additionally, the schools were able to attract donors such as Leslie Durst, who because of her arts-rich childhood in NYC, contributes large donations for Vancouver arts education. All totaled Vancouver schools now have an educational foundation maintain



with the public about students', teachers', and districts' successes. Greenville County experiences now a greater degree of parents who pitch in with materials, muscle or matching funds for grants/special projects. The school environments also began improving, as Principals began encouraging student artwork in school environments, such as a mural with "rolling South Carolina hills, dense forests, and rollicking sea waves".

Separate from parent-school relationships the outside community has become involved in a myriad of ways. As in the case of Vancouver, outside artists were brought in to participate in school residency programs and initiated professional development

come together to find a “launching pad for community development”.<sup>57</sup> Arts in their public schools have been set apart as necessary tools for this endeavor. Although the project is in its infancy, they anticipate economic benefits from this coming together of groups, organizations, and institutions. They anticipate that future audiences for performing groups will depend on the creation of interest and commitment to the arts by students today. To foster this interest, funding increases have been allocated for school arts programs, a directory of arts groups and events for children has been published, and ticket subsidies are offered for the young. Another important point the South Bronx development council has stressed is the symbiotic relationship between cultural institutions and art education. Just as cultural institutions need audiences, school-based arts programs need trained teachers, access to community arts resources, and help in the

stating that as well as contributing to “social enrichment”, they are especially a “sound investment for communities of all sizes.”<sup>58</sup>

Utilizing arts in the communities and in the schools while not a panacea for urban problems, is a viable, versatile, and progressive strategy to help struggling urban communities. The approaches adopted in Vancouver, Greenville, and in the Bronx, bear resemblance to the neighborhood revitalization that often occurs as a result of the

city” as a “generative milieu” and “site of fantasy” to spark consumer desire.<sup>61</sup> But because of its grassroots nature, the community will be less susceptible to the gentrification that occurs when capitalist interest is sparked in the community. It will be revitalizing the community from the inside out instead of vice versa. It is as Richard Florida would suggest for the establishment of a creative community: to combine “innovation and economic growth with authentic community and a better way of life” and it mirrors to a great extent the generative ability of Bohemias for the “collective process of cultural production and fostering collaboration, linking artists to audiences, and sustaining a “work culture.”<sup>62</sup>

**The Nation:**

*Society acquires new arts and loses old instincts.*

*-Ralph Waldo Emerson*

The symbiotically beneficial relationship between public arts education and community revitalization can generate benefits not only for the urban communities and individual but also for society as a whole. Currently, the Creative economy, if allowed to continue on its directed path, will, like economic systems of the past, “both exacerbate existing social problems and create new ones” posits Richard Florida.<sup>63</sup> This is due to the

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61 Lloyd, 244.

62 Lloyd, 162.

63 Florida, *The Flight of the Creative Class*, 64.

regionally uneven nature of the Creative economy's development, exemplified by the current unequal funding in public arts education.<sup>64</sup> To remedy this, Florida recommends we realize as a society that the scientific, economic, artistic, and cultural are mutually reinforcing parts of the creative whole.<sup>65</sup> This is an age where "the production and consumption of symbolic and cultural objects can be as profitable as the production and consumption of durable commodities."<sup>66</sup> If realized on a national level through the media, politicians, or influential individuals, greater support can be garnered for arts education across the country. Building a foundation for the arts would be equivalent to historical periods where canals, railroads, and highways were built to reinforce the physical

Program at the USC School of Policy, Planning, and Development, they found that the cost of providing arts programs could rise by nearly 50% and still provide a net benefit to the state, because of the savings

be encouraged and developed. Arts no longer have to be justified as an aid to math, science or any other subject matters. While students will do better in other subjects when involved in the arts, the non-academic benefits embrace culture and promote tolerance. Self-discipline, motivation, aesthetic awareness, cultural exposure, social harmony, creativity, improved emotional expression, and appreciation of diversity<sup>72</sup> are characteristics imparted to those involved in the arts. Furthermore, giving underprivileged youth this chance to gain human and creative capital welcomes expressive and valuable members into the Creative economy. These potential members are currently left behind in a “cultural caste system where only the rich can afford access to arts education.”<sup>73</sup>

Ideally, spending in the arts should be carried over into all sectors and on all levels: local, state, and federal. This would mean increases in spending for the private and public sectors in arts, in culture, and in forms of innovation and creativity.<sup>74</sup> This is not to suggest that turning everyone into artists is the goal, but instead it is the skills learned in the study of arts that lend to the personal qualities and skills appropriate for this day in age. More significantly, it is the convergence of these sectors which can strengthen at-risk communities by helping not only its children but also building social capital and the creative infrastructure that will aid in the community’s revitalization. Class and racial segregation in inner-city schools are reflections of greater

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<sup>72</sup> Eric Jensen. *Arts with the Brain in Mind*. (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001), 3.

<sup>73</sup> Silbert and Lawana, 3.

<sup>74</sup> Florida, *The Flight of the Creative Class*, 250.

socioeconomic trends in society but through arts education there is opportunity to bridge the economic, social and racial boundaries that exist, to instead build tolerance in our culture and work towards a more sustainable and equitable future.

*“When you go out on the street you see the poor man and the rich man; and when you look around, you see all the so-called educated people throughout the world wrangling, fighting, killing each other in wars. There is now Scientific knowledge enough to enable us to provide clothing, food, and shelter for all human beings, yet it is not done. The politicians and other leaders throughout the world are educated people, they have titles, degrees, caps and gowns, they are doctors, and scientists; and yet they have not created a world in which man can live happily. So modern education has failed, has it not? And if you are satisfied to be educated in the same old way, you will make another howling mess of life.”*

-J. Krishnamurti

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