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**The Wang Center for the Performing Arts
Education Department**

***Arts Can Teach (ACT)*
Comprehensive Evaluation**

Final Report

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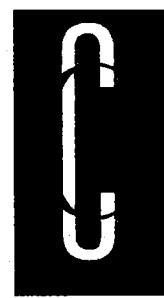


Context

With this report Colley Consulting concludes its year long evaluation of *Arts Can Teach (ACT)*, a collaboration of Boston's Wang Center for the Performing Arts, the Lynn Public Schools, and LynnArts-a community-based arts organization. The first half of our investigation studied ACT's effectiveness during its first two years, i.e. from the summer of 1998 to the spring of 2000, results from which were reported in February. This concluding report is presented in three sections: A) *ACT III – IV*, which reports on ACT from summer of 2000 to spring of 2002, B) *ACT V-IX in Lynn* – which discusses prospects for sustaining ACT in the Lynn public schools over the next five years, and C) *Next ACT*, which sets forth recommendations and suggested strategies for replicating the ACT model in other sites.

At its inception, the purpose of ACT was "...to establish the arts as a well-integrated component in the Lynn school curriculum while providing the tools to help community members achieve their long-term goals for cultural programming." Its stated objectives are: "1) to train artists and educators who are central to improving the level of arts programming, 2) to broaden the network of arts advocates in Lynn, 3) to involve parents, teachers, and school administrators in developing a curriculum-based strategic plan for systemic change in the schools arts education program, and 4) to expose students to new ways of learning and representing what they have learned" (Wang Center Interim Reports, ACT I-III). Under its current structure, the ACT program matches individual Lynn teachers with a practicing artist in full year partnerships consisting of five modules: Summer Institute, Orientation and Residency, Independent Project, Exhibition, and Evaluation. Now in its fourth year of operation (*Act IV, 2001-02*), the ACT program has involved over 70 teachers and 49 artists, has operated in 9 schools, and has reached over 1100 students in the Lynn community since its inception in 1998.

Using its stated goals and objectives as our underlying measure of the program's strengths or weaknesses, Colley Consulting was asked by the Wang Center's Chief Executive Officer Josiah Spaulding, Education Director Anne Norton, and Director of Foundation & Government Support Victoria Walsh to structure a comprehensive evaluation which combined data that staff and participants had already compiled with new data researched by our own team to study the program's effectiveness.



Specifically, we focused our study and analysis toward two areas: a) teachers' and students' behavioral and attitudinal changes which resulted from ACT participation, and b) organizational and administrative program operations which influenced the program's effectiveness. Ultimately, our charge was to use this information to assess *first* what had and hadn't worked over the course of the program's four years in development, *second*, what shape and direction ACT should take in Lynn over the next five years and, *third*, what the defining parameters of ACT replication in other sites should be.

Method

Data for this portion of our study stemmed from a variety of sources and methods: We examined program documents including, e.g., internal and external program communications, the Wang Center's interim and final reports, grant applications, videos of ACT activities, and press releases. We designed, distributed and analyzed surveys for a sample of teacher, artist, and school principal participants. We analyzed the required written post-program evaluations submitted by all artists and teacher participants in ACT III & IV. We conducted in-depth personal interviews with all major stakeholders in ACT: school administrators, Fine Arts personnel, the Wang Center's executive, education, and development management, and LynnArts Executive Director and ACT coordinator. We analyzed participant usage data provided to us by the Wang Center, which documented ACT's program growth over its first four years. We observed the ACT program *in situ*, attending training sessions, students' classes, evaluation meetings, public exhibits, and planning meetings. In the course of these observations, we conducted informal interviews with program coordinators and participants.

A) ACT III-IV (2000-2002)

For an in-depth report of the program development which preceded ACT III & IV, the reader is referred to the February Mid-project report. To recap its main points, the program was launched in one school with 13 teachers, 11 artists, and 130 seventh grade students in its pilot year. By the end of the ACT II year, it had expanded to include 2 schools, 22 teachers, 12 artists and 375 seventh and eight



grade students. While minor operational snags remained to be worked out, the conceptual underpinnings of the program had been well established and, more significantly, *embraced and endorsed* by the most program participants. We attributed this largely to the fact that the LynnArts ACT coordinator and Wang Education staff had maintained a client-service attitude and approach throughout, making at least 10 significant structural improvements which had been driven by teacher and artist feedback. As it set out on its third year of operation, the program had become popular enough with teachers and artists to involve 3 schools, 28 teachers, 19 artists, and 600 students in grades six, seven, and eight. Moreover, many of the teachers and artists expressed desire to participate for a second year. Interest in the program's continued development and growth remained high among ACT staff and participants.

Teacher Impact

Analysis of ACT III-IV teacher and artist evaluations revealed themes similar to those of the ACT I-II cohorts in terms of motivation, experience, perceptions, and assessment of the program's strengths and weaknesses. For this reason, our discussion below contains fewer excerpted anecdotes and direct quotes from teachers' reports than our previous report, on issues where statements duplicate the sentiments of ACT I-II participations. During ACT IV we gained additional perspective from: a) on-site observations of ACT activities, b) school principals' reports as to the program's impact on teachers, c) attendance at public exhibitions, and d) examination of ACT's products. All of these provided further insight into the program's contributions to teachers' professional growth and development. Also, the new step of allowing ACT teachers to participate for two consecutive years, either with the same or a change of artist, produced data which allowed us to study longer-term "saturation" effects of this model.

When asked to describe what they learn or accomplish as a result of their ACT participation, teachers responses center on two general topics: *confidence* or self-awareness of their own skill development, and *acquisition of specific technical skills* in a particular art form, including a broader understanding and appreciation of the artistic *process* as a result. The summer institute/presentation component of ACT appears crucial in fostering the confidence teachers need to demonstrate and use these new skills in the



fall and spring residency activities during the ACT academic year which immediately follows. Responses about mastering technique in the art form are mentioned as a "challenge" by 90% of the respondents to post-program surveys. When asked their reaction to sharing with peers at the close of the Summer Institute, 90% claim its value is in overcoming their nervousness in presentations using their newly learned skills in writing poetry, creative movement, painting, kite-making, storytelling, etc. .

During both ACT III and ACT IV, staff solicited teachers' evaluations immediately following both the Winter *and* Spring classroom residencies. Echoing teachers' reports from ACT's first two years, ACT II & IV teachers describe the changes they observe in themselves over time using a variety of descriptors which indicate personal and pedagogical growth. They say, e.g., they are more "relaxed," "enthusiastic," "comfortable with the new art form," "surprised by their students' abilities in [it]," "confident," "trusting of their own instincts," "flexible," and "understanding of the art form and process." Their pedagogy has changed and improved because they have learned to "connect their own discipline elsewhere," "through" or "to" art. They have learned "new methods and strategies of teaching." At the conclusion of their ACT year, some participants feel confident enough to lead art-related activities in the classroom on their own, though others are still unsure as to whether they would need the artist present. Teachers who participate in the program for two years with the same artist express significantly more confidence in themselves to design and implement an arts project than their peers.

By *all* teachers' accounts, *the* winning design component of ACT is the relationship between artist and teacher that develops over the course of a full year, beginning with an intense one-to-one 10 day studio experience in the summer. However, the subject of artists' presence itself raises an interesting question about the longitudinal goal of ACT in terms of professional development. When asked whether teachers could use the art form *on their own* in the classroom in subsequent years, responses are mixed. In listening to ACT IV artists' round-table ACT IV evaluation discussions, we observed that teachers' level of post-program "ACTivism," if you will, ranges from small kernels of new-found confidence to outright transformative zealotry. Some feel that even one year isn't sufficient time to expect teachers to then continue solo. Others say that bits and pieces of projects could be implemented but not with the depth



and comprehensive approach that the artist brings to it, and a third sentiment expressed is that it is the artists' very *presence* in the classrooms which make the program special and effective. When we asked school principals to cite the program's strength, two principals said:

The professional development for the teachers is a plus. In addition, it gave them creative outlets that had gone unexplored. It brought out creativity in them all. Having artists, with all their talent, come in to the classroom to work with our teachers and students was invaluable. Working in the classrooms brought expertise and talent that could not be taught to the teachers alone.

The major strength is that it gives the students a different window to the content. It also exposes the students to a "real" artist – somebody different from their regular classroom teacher, thus breaking up the routine. I believe that the most valuable components are the hands-on work that the students need to do with artists to create their final product, and this year, the exhibition of student work was exceptional.

We would encourage further deliberation on this point among ACT staff and participants. If, after further discussion with past participants, program officers decide that student-artist contact is an essential component to the program's success, perhaps it would be worth considering adding a third teacher category to ACT's structure, which gives second-year participants the option of continuing for a third year with the same artist. These teachers would work relatively independently, with limited artist contact. They could probably function comfortably without the summer institute experience, and could devise a classroom project arrangement whereby the artist would make visits for demonstration purposes, and act in a supportive advisory capacity for curriculum projects.

Finally, it is worth noting artists' collective perceptions of teacher impact, especially since a number of artists have been with the program since its inception and have partnered with many teachers of diverse student populations in a variety of curricular subjects. In general, they advise that teachers still need more recognition and positive support for their daily efforts. The Wang Center and LynnArts provide external validation to teachers in public exhibitions of student and teacher work, the ACT newsletter, field trip to a Wang performance, and the person-to-person connection with "outside" professionals. All of these validate and support teachers' intellectual and pedagogical development, which is too rare a commodity in teachers' professional lives. The artists suggest, and we concur, that LynnArts and the Wang Center continue and extend such support, e.g., in the form of teacher workshops, art materials,



visitations to classrooms, exhibit opportunities, teacher-to-teacher networking, and financial compensation for ACT participation.

Student Impact

We reported in February that plans were underway for us to interview a number of students who had participated in both ACT I & II to assess students' perceptions of the ACT's experience, and to corroborate the secondary accounts of student impact by teachers and artists. Unfortunately, after numerous and frequent attempts to facilitate access to students through LynnArts via the school department, we were unable to do so. Apparently, only scant records of participating students had been kept in ACT's early years, and compiling the necessary additional information to identify and locate remaining students could not be executed by school personnel. As evaluators we are, of course, disappointed to be missing data that could have provided information as to ACT's ultimate impact on its intended beneficiaries. However, we hold no single party responsible. Given the practical and logistical impediments to communication in collaborative ventures, we understand that each partner's organizational protocols—including access to constituents, must be respected. Unfortunately this can, and does, slow communication and thwart progress – something to remember for the future.

We advise that this experience be instructive for the future in underscoring the importance and need for *student* participation records. We would like to note that the staff did an excellent job of doing so for ACT teachers and artists, which was of great help in our own work. As LynnArts and the Lynn public schools embark on Stage Two of ACT, they should consider the myriad paths students take in the Lynn school system once their ACT involvement officially ends. The task of tracking students through their middle and high school years to record subsequent academic and arts related activity is *essential* to the program's continued growth and development and, moreover, provides a service to the field in general. Longitudinal studies of program effects on students are the most cumbersome, most expensive, most time-consuming, type of educational research. Yet they are the *most informative and valuable* indicators of program impact. The Lynn ACT experience has the potential to contribute substantially to a body of



knowledge concerning the long term impact of collaborative initiatives in advancing the status of arts education nationwide.

In the absence of primary-source data from students who participated in ACT, we can report that secondary accounts from most teachers and artists who had daily contact note positive outcomes for ACT's students. Like their peers who participated during ACT I & II, ACT III & IV partnerships reported a variety of changes in student behaviors. Students are said to exhibit "pride," "confidence," "self-esteem," "excitement and investment in their project and in learning in general," "a desire to finish their work," "a more outgoing approach from previously shy students," and "a comfort with the medium and its power." Some teachers praised the program for the awareness, exposure and access to art and artists that is otherwise unavailable to Lynn students. Others feel that it nourishes "creative intelligence" and sparks an interest in the content matter at hand. Several teachers reported that an ACT project had spawned enough interest to initiate a student's exploring and undertaking arts related work outside of the required school projects. Some teachers like the ACT program for its "fun;" others for its "rigor and discipline;" still others for the "I can-do-this" confidence it instills in students who normally feel defeated.

In relevance to the impact of this program on students, we think it valuable to present what the ACT program's effect has been in terms of its *approach to content* for students. We contend that this discussion is pertinent to examining the ACT model as an "arts education" program.

In independent surveys sent to ACT teachers, artists, and principals, we asked respondents to briefly list and describe their participation activities. Two of the artists' responses showcase the flexibility, openness, and *customized* adaptation to subject matter that the mind of an artist can bring to a teacher's routine classroom work. The descriptions below highlight the sheer *breadth* of content that just *two* creative individuals – one whose limited specialty is but a single *item*, can cover. In its raw form, the data is testimony to the program's adaptability and usefulness *across* the curriculum. It also emphasizes the importance of selecting artists who are able *and willing* to customize their work to the needs of each participant. Such customization was indeed a contributing factor in ACT's popularity with Lynn's teachers.



The first artist is a dancer; the second makes kites:

ACT II, Junior high choral music - 3 residencies:

1. Eurhythmics- teaching basic concepts of music theory through movement
2. Developing Musical Expressivity (dynamics, articulation, phrasing, etc.) through Movement
3. An Exploration of Two Historic American Dance Styles from '40s and '60s for spring concert

ACT II, Junior High Social Studies. 3 residencies:

1. History of the Dominican Republic, the synergy of African and European elements in New World culture, through The Merengue and Ballroom Dancing
2. Geography Mapping: a unit teaching mapping concepts (scale, the key, orientation, and the grid) by linking them to movement concepts
3. American History - Native American, African, and European influences - a look at the use of gesture in the three dominant cultures that initially populated the United States

ACT III, Junior High English as a Second Language (ESL).

Vocabulary and popular American dances- for a class of brand new teenage immigrant girls, we taught groups of words (body parts, directions, verbs, etc.) while sharing contemporary popular teenage dances (Macarena, Electric slide, Hokey Pokey, etc.)

ACT III, Junior High mathematics-sequencing, counting, patterns: [Kite maker] invited me to set a "Dancing with Kites" piece for his students, to showcase the kites they had made during his residency for the ACT exhibit, as well as provide challenges in the areas of, teamwork, performance skills, etc.

ACT IV, Fifth grade ESL and Social Studies: Native American spiritual beliefs and Colonial lifestyle- work included poetry, Native American sign language, singing, students' writing, and an original dance piece. For Kathleen's independent project we looked at the place of dance in Colonial life, and learned 3 dances from the period (Cotton-Eyed Joe, Simple Square, and Virginia Reel)

ACT IV, Junior High Special Education Life Skills: Reinforce these students' skills in visual recognition, sequencing, and math throughout the year through creative movement, while developing their basic loco-motor skills and introducing them to the joys of physical exploration.

ACT II, Sixth Grade: Computers and Mathematics

This class was focused on computers so Stan and I developed a program where the students had to learn to use the computer to make templates for two types of kites. They learned to use a draw program and make their templates to scale, print and then enlarge them to full size. The student then constructed 2 kites from their full size template. We made wine rack kites and cube kites. We took the students out to test fly each project.

ACT III, Seventh Grade: Mathematics and Science

We developed experiments to apply Pythagorean Theorem to Measure how high our kites fly, how high the building is and the height of a specific tree is. Students mastered the use of a protractor, calculators and practical algebraic equations to make and prove their calculations. After making an Eddy kite we took a field trip to a local park to test and do experiments. We collaborated with another artist in the program and developed a performance incorporating kites and dance. This was performed for the student body.

ACT IV, Fifth Grade: Mathematics, Science, History



We explored geometric shapes of kites, performed experiments using kites and their aerodynamic shapes to track changes in flight characteristics, tracked origin of kites and how they moved from one continent to another through the centuries. We discussed the history of kites and how they developed through the ages.

Taken collectively, and assessed in their entirety, the description of these classroom experiences begin to explain the value that participants ascribe and attach to their relationship and work with these outside professionals.

As an added benefit, class projects result in interesting and high quality displays of teachers' and students' finished work products at Spring art exhibitions. The ACT IV exhibition was a combined presentation of ACT products and those of the Fine Arts Department, i.e. projects accomplished under the leadership of Lynn's art specialists in art classes. We compiled a list of lesson topics and objectives demonstrated by the ACT final products and those developed and taught by Lynn's art specialists, which resulted in the following:

ACT IV Projects

Language

Expression: Poetry Forms
Analysis
Myth: Belief Systems
Plot: Character Development
Storytelling

Mathematics

Measurement
Geometry
Symmetry

Social Studies

Geography
Cultural Norms

History

Information, Facts
Analysis of Events

Science

Observation
Classification-Color, Shape, Texture
Physics-Balance, Weight, Proportion

Art Classes

Media

Clay
Charcoal
Pastels
Paper
Paint
Chalk

Dimension

Paper Sculpture
Origami & Cut Paper Design

Perspective

Light and Shadow
Portraiture

Form

Line
Pattern
Positive and Negative space

Color

Black and White
Color Spectrum

Style/Design

Mesopotamian, Greek/Egypt



Comparison of the two raised some interesting and salient issues to the research team concerning the overarching expectation that ACT would assist in "...developing a curriculum-based strategic plan for systemic change in the schools arts education program." As the foregoing descriptions of the two artists' projects attests, curricula areas addressed by ACT, with the exception of a few art or music specialists who participated, are math, science, language arts, history, geography, social studies, etc.

Clearly, the left hand ACT column shows the diversity of subjects to which art and artists can be of use, and answers the central question begged by the programs very name *Arts Can Teach... what?...all* of the above – just about *anything* presumably, assuming a limitless imagination. The right hand column dwells in the content with which arts specialists (here, visual arts) are charged – the elements, technique, and *vocabulary of art* itself. A cursory reading in a quick glance contrasts "learning *through* the arts" to "learning *in* the arts." Which, then, is the "curricula" that the designers sought to "change systemically" in Lynn's "arts education program"? When we questioned ACT IV artists as to the degree that topics, vocabulary, and abstract concepts such as those in the right-hand column were included or addressed in their projects, and what they would expect students to know or understand about *art* as a result, the replies indicate that neither teachers nor artists expect students' to acquire this body of knowledge as a result of the ACT program. Some do acknowledge, or speculate, that understanding may occur incidentally or accidentally. One disciplined-based content outcome we found, for example, in the ACT IV cohort was a painter who used portraiture as a technique in the study of Native Americans. Another ACT IV painter, when asked what she would expect students to know or be able to do *in art* as a result of the science project where students observed and recorded visually Lynn's natural habitats replied,

...that drawing helps you to see in a deeper way; also how to "tune" colors, i.e., to obtain the naturalists' shades of blues and greens through explorations with color mixing- that not all paint comes out of a bottle the color you need to accurately replicate what you observe in nature...

Now that the ACT program has launched a foundation for acknowledgement of art and art-making as a "window to content" by its proponents, it's appropriate and prudent – if **arts** education is, as claimed, the targeted and ultimate beneficiary of ACT, that program officers clarify which content is *really* targeted and



served. So far, and currently, it is **not** the arts in most cases. With the exception of a few projects over four years, the arts were used as a conduit for learning the substance of whatever curricular subject is targeted by the teacher. That is not to say that arts-based skills in various media are not developed and reinforced through the program, but learning *in* the arts is not ACT's primary focus, and so to posit ACT as an arts education initiative is somewhat inaccurate. That ACT participation *leads* to learning in the arts and has been a *catalyst* for support of Lynn's arts education programs is established, and will be discussed further in the next section.

The differences between objectives of programs that facilitate learning *through* the arts and those that foster learning *in* the arts is a point we feel merits attention in the next stage of ACT's existence in Lynn. ACT teachers and artists need to be at least aware of the state frameworks related to the art forms that they themselves are learning and helping their students to acquire. Simple acts like using the vocabulary of the discipline, properly naming the techniques they're using, pointing out the effects of changing media, etc. will establish the given art form as an intellectual body of knowledge wedded to students' "hands-on" learning. If not being done so now, artists and teachers participating in ACT, for example, should be provided copies of the Massachusetts State Arts Curriculum Frameworks, and the National Standards in the Arts. In addition, when possible, conversations between Lynn's Fine Art personnel and ACT's artists should be facilitated, especially in instances when content disciplines intersect. The ACT program and the Fine Arts Department curricular goals can complement one another beautifully, and we would hope that efforts be made during ACT's second stage to ensure that they do. Were all children in Lynn to have the benefit *both* of ACT projects in their "academic" coursework, and regular in-depth arts instruction by qualified specialists, we would expect Lynn to produce students who are both well skilled and articulate in the techniques and concepts of the arts disciplines. They would be able to use these abilities to communicate information and to express a point of view, on a given topic, in a chosen medium.



Program Operations

For both ACT III & IV, teachers and artists continued to report some logistical problems concerning scheduling conflicts, class time, and school facilities in trying to carry out their projects in classrooms. Last minute school schedule changes, teachers' tight schedules, lack of water and/or sinks, no gymnasium or large open space, moving furniture, etc. are among the often unavoidable impediments to working in schools. Second year participants, however, claimed that they had had a substantial "head-start" due to a familiarity with the art form, knowing its curricular potential, anticipating its special requirements, and having an accurate sense of what applications and activities would work with their particular age group. The suggested time allotments for each of the four components that staff had evolved over the program's four-year development were generally felt to be satisfactory. Some partnerships exceeded the requirements by choice. Some artists suggested that more time be allotted to artists for observing the class and getting to know the students better before embarking on the fall project.

In assessing the success of the independent project component, clearly the second year participants had an advantage of confidence and skill, and were therefore able to function more independently than first year teachers. In addition, we concluded that teachers' "independence quotients", so to speak, were a function of pedagogical approach and personal learning style. Some teachers need a "prototype" to "copy," e.g. in the case of poetry books. Others find that if they just focus on one element in an art form, e.g. -- when learning storytelling, -- weaving historical fact into a story before tackling issues of plot, timing, gesture, effects, and performance, they were more successful. As one artist said, a lot of teachers "get it" but can't "do it," so they need the artist both to "break down the medium into its smallest components" to be practiced, and also to be a catalyst off whom the teacher can "bounce ideas."

As planning for ACT V approached in the spring, the Lynn school department's budgetary dilemmas resulted in 150 teachers receiving layoff notifications. Since ACT's program structure necessitates a relatively early commitment by teachers in order to pair teachers with artists in time for the summer institute, many interested teachers either missed the registration deadline, or have discovered



they are without a job. We are disappointed to report that the participation numbers from ACT IV to ACT V have, consequently, dropped. Our survey data from teacher and principals indicates that word-of-mouth from past participants is still ACT's most effective recruiting mechanism. Since program growth as measured by new recruits has not been at the level that was expected, nor hoped for, more effort needs to be directed toward capitalizing upon past participants' experience through documentation, advocacy, and dissemination-through-conversation in upcoming years.

In assessing the extent to which ACT's operations strategy aided in achieving its mission, we felt that the culminating Spring exhibition at LynnArts represented a significant turning point for this program. First, according to the LynnArts executive director, it was the most well-attended event ever at Lynn's only art gallery. Second, it was attended by a host of local and state dignitaries prominent in education and the arts. Among them were: president of the Lynn Business Education Foundation, Wang Center Chief Executive Officer, Lynn Public Schools' Director of Fine Arts, Superintendent of Schools, representatives from General Electric and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, LynnArts board members, three Lynn school committee members, and an overflow crowd of teachers, artists, parents, and students. Third, as a joint exhibition of LynnArts and the Fine Arts Department, it was a public display of cooperation between ACT partners and the Lynn public schools' Fine Arts Department. A student violinist who made all-state district orchestra solos as her music teacher accompanied. Arts specialists had mounted displays of their students' work from art classes.

In sum total, the event sent a public message to parents and community members attending that learning *in and through the arts* is supported and valued by the school department and community arts organization in fulfilling Lynn's mission of **educating** its children. We congratulate the staff, teachers, and students who brought this effort to fruition; we complement all of ACT's partners for their obvious dedication to the cause; and we commend the sensitive coordination of ACT coordinator Kerry Bastarache and all others instrumental in bringing these myriad players and program components together. The event spoke volumes of testimony to the ACT program's accomplishments that our report texts cannot. You had to be there.



B) Phase Two: ACT V-IX in Lynn (2002-2007)

In answer to one of our evaluation questions, *What worked and what didn't work over the course of this initiative?*, we found substantial evidence that the ACT initiative had, indeed, advanced *the arts* in Lynn's classrooms, schools, and community. We can not report that the partnership did achieve *fully* its original mission to "establish the arts as a well-integrated component in the Lynn school curriculum," but the collaborative made remarkable and commendable strides in that direction. We have much to offer the field in arts education partnerships based on what we have learned from the Lynn ACT experience.

First, the ACT model definitely proved itself an *effective catalyst for increasing public attention* to learning, both in the arts and in other subjects. The enthusiastic attendance at school-site and LynnArts exhibits by participating students and their parents, the attention and support given ACT by local businesses such as General Electric and the Lynn press are indicative that the program has garnered sufficient attention to now perhaps launch an arts advocacy constituency group. Second, the program has become a *catalyst for increased support and attention to education, in and through the arts, within the public school system* in the form of requests for additional arts personnel and line item school budget appropriations. Since education reform in Massachusetts has brought with it site-based management of schools, whether children receive regular arts instruction by specialists is frequently determined by the individual building principal. One ACT school principal in Lynn, who said she was attracted to the program because her school has no art teacher, told us:

Attending the exhibit at Lynn Community Arts, I could see the impact on all the dignitaries, teachers, parents, and students in attendance. It has given me the impetus to bring in an art teacher to my organization.

In addition, Lynn's school superintendent recently dedicated \$25,000 for the ACT program in the preliminary school budget, and has charged the Fine Arts Director with its administration and oversight in cooperation with LynnArts. Third, the ACT experience has shown that systemic change-an original program goal, is a slow and multi-directional process. In order to influence arts education policy in the



upper administrative levels of a school system, one must simultaneously conduct a *high quality* program at the grass roots teacher level in order to convince constituents of the program's practical and substantive value. Fourth, persistent attention to client satisfaction pays off. As we reported in February, the ACT staff and coordinators consistently and sensitively dealt with, and responded to, teachers' needs and suggestions and continually improved the program accordingly, a factor which contributed greatly to the teachers' positive response. Fifth, high standards for participating artists are a must. Individuals selected must not only be well versed and skilled in their disciplines but also flexible, accommodating, gracious, understanding, and perseverant in serving the program's purpose. Sixth, word of mouth is still the most effective means of recruitment and program growth. Our data indicates that many of the teachers who came to this program heard about it from a past participant who had valued it. This was true for artists and principals as well as teachers.

In summary, we found this program to have been successful, and the model to be well grounded conceptually. Out of the four original objectives listed on page two, the initiative reached a commendable three and a half, (i.e. all but...*developing a curriculum based strategic plan for systemic change in the schools arts education program*). With periodic input from an ACT Advisory Team consisting of Wang Center staff, teachers, artists, and principals, we would encourage the Lynn Public schools' Fine Arts Department in coordination with LynnArts, to work toward ACT's expansion and growth. Specifically, we recommend that over the next five years, efforts be focused on the following:

- Recruitment: Capitalize on the enthusiasm of past participants to serve as "ACTivists", for the program. Arrange for a sample of them to speak informally to teachers' meetings in schools about their experiences and the program's benefits. Be certain that arts specialists are among both the bearers and recipients of the program information. Be clear about its primary conceptual goal of learning through the arts, and its potential ultimate benefits to the advancement of arts education.
- Growth Plan: Develop a blueprint for how ACT will look in its second phase. We contend that there are two paths to take, and it might make sense initially to exercise both options simultaneously. Many respondents reported to us that ACT's success was due to the fact that it was teacher-driven, i.e. teachers *elected* to participate instead of being required to do so by their building principal, as has been the case with other less successful third-party cultural institutions initiatives in Lynn. School principals felt it should be administered through the Fine Arts Department but at the site principal's discretion to be involved how they best see fit. However, equitable distribution and access throughout the school system is both reasonable, and



somewhat of a necessity, now that the Fine Arts Department is officially allied to ACT. We suggest that the ACT partners decide first *how much* growth is reasonable and possible, and develop a *rationale* for targeting specific schools or populations that makes sense both to LynnArts and to the Fine Arts Department in terms of their individual long range organizational plans. Perhaps a reasonable operating goal to achieve given Lynn's size would be running ACT in 8-10 schools per year with 5-7 teachers per site.

- Evaluation: Continue the conscientious documentation and ongoing internal evaluation that the program officers have set as precedent. Add to that record keeping of *student participants* for internal tracking of students' arts activity/involvement subsequent to their ACT experiences, and for ongoing periodic third-party evaluations every 3-5 years.
- Impact: Continue to test ACT's ability to be a catalyst for improving *arts* education by measuring its success in terms of measurable and tangible commodities which achieve that goal, e.g. parent attendance at art exhibits, school site requests for arts personnel or supplies from school principals, improved or new arts facilities, number of new classroom teachers recruited each year in ACT, etc.
- Advocacy: Use the benefits of the ACT model to traditional academic subjects as rationale for broadening the base of support for arts education **beyond** the typical arts establishment folk. If ACT, in fact, does have the potential to enhance learning in all disciplines, support for it, including financial, should be expected from all camps, i.e. school budgets for **all** subjects and organizations which represent and serve **all** teachers such as the MEA, MFT, MA Department of Education, etc.. Resist attempts to link program outcomes to standardized test scores. Instead, insist on its intrinsic worth according to the desirable goal of producing educated, multi-talented people.
- Public Relations: Now that ACT is on the threshold of forming an official line-itemed alliance with the Lynn school system, allow ACT to run its natural course of identity change, as some participants call it, from the "Wang" program to the "LynnArts" program. Use the imprimatur and support of the Wang Center judiciously. The Wang Center "jump started" ACT in a way that might not have been possible without them. However, do think of other ways, that their stature and influence might serve the broader purpose of boosting and building involvement in art among Lynn's citizenry. One art teacher suggested, for example, that the now empty charter school across from the Fine Arts Department become a "Wang Satellite Site" – an arts resource center for the school department. Possibilities are limitless. Think big
- Scope: As a long-range goal, work to expand the definition of "Fine Arts" in Lynn schools to include Dance and Drama, as the MA state frameworks and National Arts Standards suggest. Since the Director's job has grown rather suddenly from music director, to include visual arts just recently, we do not recommend adding dance and drama to his job responsibilities. However, we do view this as one area where content expertise from LynnArts and other cultural organizations can perhaps be useful and inform long range planning and growth.



C) Next ACTs – Replication in Other Sites

Based on what we have learned about this model from the Lynn experience, we believe that replication elsewhere is not only possible but recommended. At this juncture, Lynn's ACT program is poised on the threshold of "Phase Two", i.e. the transition of the program's locus of operation from outside the school system to within it, from a third-party "outreach" initiative to a line item embedded in the school Fine Arts department. What effect this development will have on the tenor and shape of the program, only time will tell. We predict that ACT's presence and effects will, indeed, increase internal and external attention and support for the schools' arts programs. We believe that as long as communication between LynnArts and Fine Arts personnel is open, frequent, and driven toward program quality and growth, the health of this program, and the growth of support for arts education in Lynn will remain strong. As the Wang Center management embarks on developing plans for replicating this model elsewhere, we suggest the following:

Mission

- Revise the stated mission of ACT to focus on its value as a *catalyst*, rather than instrument, for advancing arts education in schools through "engendering the impetus," as a staff member wrote, to *establish support* for the arts instead of "establishing the arts as a well-integrated component."
- Be careful in your use of the term "arts education." Differentiate between objectives of learning *through* the arts to understand other subjects, from learning *in* the arts as respected content disciplines having intellectual integrity of their own. *Emphatically support both* as central to your local mission, and to the broader mission of an educated people. Cite the state frameworks position on the value of art as both a *discipline* and *connector* in cognitive growth, and include the National Standards in the Arts as part of your broader agenda
- Remain focused on *teacher training*, rather than sweeping systemic change, as your goal. The designers and early developers of ACT realized early on that systemic change was "too lofty" and unrealistic.
- Keep the *structural components* of the program intact. The year-long pairing of artist to teacher, beginning with an intense summer studio experience, is especially meaningful to teachers and *effective* in achieving desired outcomes.
- From the outset, clarify and underscore the Wang Center's role as venture capitalist, if you will. The Wang Center's presence should be considerable at first, but plan an specified exit point at which time the local leadership is expected to sustain program operation and support

