

FACT SHEET

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Creativity and empathy: the missing links

Art is a native language of children and a powerful tool for nurturing every child's innate creativity. Research indicates that a child who is exposed to the arts will have a better chance to grow up to be more creative, imaginative, expressive, confident, self-reliant and critically thinking adult. The child shall have acquired a special creative ability to innovate and produce intellectual property – keys to prosperity and success in the 21st century.

But when a child's creativity is not encouraged it may be lost forever. The influence of certain developmental stages in the creative and imaginative lives of children and adults is well documented in scientific literature on creativity. Within this body of data, E. Paul Torrance, regarded as the father of creativity, has evidenced a "4th grade slump" across cultures. Psychologist Mark Runco has noted that maturational processes or an emphasis on conforming behavior can cause the "4th grade slump", but in either case it can be overcome.

Scientists David Bohm and F. David Peat have called for the resurgence of creativity in all areas of life. They consider creativity a basic human need, which when thwarted makes a civilized society lose its defense against debasing and destructive forces.

Creativity alone is a necessary but not the only condition sufficient for sustainable prosperity and peace. Empathy in children must be cultivated as well. Today neuroscience indicates that empathy is hard-wired in human brain, which is most likely the result of evolutionary processes. The brain recognizes that we need to work together to improve life and preserve our fragile planet, but our base and selfish instincts often take control. Social researchers have found empathy to be a key attribute of successful learners and leaders.

The ICAF

The International Child Art Foundation supports a comprehensive, holistic approach to child development by embracing innovative programs that heal, inspire and unify children across the globe. The ICAF serves as the national art organization for American children and is the leading international arts organization for the world's children. The ICAF has over a decade's worth of experience in harnessing children's imagination for positive social change.

Mission

To integrate arts with science, sport and technology for the development of children's creativity and empathy – preconditions for a more just, prosperous and nonviolent world.

Intervention

The ICAF focuses primarily on children ages 8 to 12 because of the "4th grade slump." These formative years are vital for the encouragement of empathy and moral-cognitive thinking. The ICAF's Arts Olympiads, World Children's Festivals, interactive exhibitions, and *ChildArt* magazine inspire the children, boost their self-esteem, develop trust among them, and build a creative nexus for the future. The ICAF's innovative research, free lesson plans, and monthly newsletter, *Sketches*, provide teachers and parents the tools they need to enhance the creative and cooperative potential of children across the globe.

The Arts Olympiad

Every four years the ICAF launches the Arts Olympiad, a free global program for all children. The Third Arts Olympiad (2005-2008) theme *My Favorite Sport* celebrates the “artist-athlete” ideal of a creative mind and healthy body. The Arts Olympiad Lesson Plans encourage artistically inclined children to develop their physical abilities and inspire athletically inclined children to be creative. Many children around the world, including those living in orphanages and refugee camps, never get to make art unless presented with the Arts Olympiad experience.

Canal Futura, Brazil's educational television translated the Arts Olympiad Lesson Plan into Portuguese and involved 484 schools and an estimated 29,000 students in the Third Arts Olympiad. "The Arts Olympiad has become a great national celebration in Israel," says Dr. Naomi Jaffe, National Superintendent for Art & Theatre Studies at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. The Shanghai Cultural Development Foundation, the ICAF's strategic partner in China, involved nearly one million children in the Third Arts Olympiad.

At the community level, the Arts Olympiad develops empathy invoked through art and team spirit instilled by sport to promote the Olympic ideals of mutual respect and tolerance.

At the Croatian Olympic Center outside Zagreb, First Lady Milka Mesic hosted a two-day celebration in February 2006 for the 30 national Arts Olympiad finalists. The children stayed in dorms normally reserved for Olympic athletes and interacted with Gordan Kozulj, Croatia's star swimmer. In Ethiopia, the African Child Policy Forum translated the Arts Olympiad Lesson Plan into Amharic, and received 3,268 art competition entries. The Ethiopian Television and Radio covered the exhibition hosted at the Embassy of Bulgaria in Addis Ababa on December 15, 2005. In the urban square of the Sharjah Art Museum in the United Arab Emirates, 18 final selections were displayed for the judges to choose the Arts Olympiad finalist on October 12, 2005. With a clipboard in hand, the judges stopped at each easel, took notes and carefully made their selections. Forty-four students with physical and mental handicaps at the Spring Branch Independent Schools District in Houston, Texas, participated in 12 events that combined art and sport, organized by Jody and David Butler who had traveled to Greece and Italy to study ancient sculptures and their relationship to modern Olympics. At hand in Houston was Eric Thomas, a USA Track & Field 2000 Olympian, who awarded medals to the artist-athletes.

World Children's Festival

The ICAF's international celebration is held every four years, traditionally on the National Mall in Washington, DC. In June 2007, 200 young musicians, dancers and performers representing 15 countries joined the Arts Olympiad finalists and their parents and teachers from 25 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and 32 countries at the World Children's Festival. Nearly 200 international experts had also come together to hold 67 workshops during the three-day festival to integrate the arts with science, sport and technology. Approximately 10,000 people attended the festival, which was open and free to the public.

Words cannot express our gratitude to you! You made it possible to bring together the most gifted child artists in the world to meet each other, share experiences and develop their creative talents. The entire event exceeded our dreams!
- Eszter Kovacs sister of Attila Kovacs, Arts Olympiad finalist of Hungary

We are thrilled to bring a LEGO building experience to the world's largest celebration of creativity and imagination on the National Mall. What the International Child Art Foundation does to encourage a child's inner creativity is something we passionately admire and are proud to support, because we believe children who are exposed to creative activities from a very young age go on to become the world's most meaningful contributors.
- Michael McNally, brand relations direction, LEGO Systems, Inc.

At the global level, the Arts Olympiad fosters trust and understanding to build and bridge global creative communities. The ICAF will launch the Fourth Arts Olympiad (2009-2012) in late 2008.

Peace through Art

In response to the 9/11 tragedy, the ICAF developed an innovative approach to reduce trans-generational transmission of trauma and hatred. The methodology was field-tested in 2002 with a program for Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot youth, funded in part by the Cyprus Fulbright Commission. The UK's leading medical journal the Lancet featured the approach in December 2006.

Healing Arts

Based on the knowledge and experience gained from the treatment of child survivors of the 9/11 tragedy and other disasters, in January 2005 the ICAF launched a program to aid child victims of the Asian tsunami. Later that year, the ICAF volunteers were using their tsunami experience to help children in the U.S. directly affected by Hurricane Katrina.

Public Exhibitions

The masterpieces of the Arts Olympiad finalists are exhibited at each World Children's Festival in a specially constructed pavilion on the National Mall, across from the National Gallery of Art. The ICAF has also held exhibitions at White House events, the United Nations Headquarters, the IMF/World Bank Annual Meetings, the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turn and Harvard University.

"The beauty and thoughtfulness of these works offer powerful evidence of the breadth and depth of the global conversation that is cultivated and perpetuated through children's art."

- Dr. Jessica Hoffmann Davis, Harvard Graduate School of Education

ChildArt magazine

Since 1998 the ICAF has published the quarterly *ChildArt* magazine. Free of advertisements, *ChildArt* is a leading magazine for children's creative development and global education.

Sketches newsletter

More than 23,000 creative individuals currently subscribe to the ICAF monthly newsletter, which inspires them to become anchors of sustainable creative and cooperative communities.

Outreach and support

Over the past ten years the ICAF has established a network of partner organizations in the U.S. and nearly 100 countries. To date, more than 5 million children have directly participated in the Arts Olympiads and an estimated 10 million additional children have benefited within various capacities through the ICAF exhibitions, publications and festivals. The U.S. Olympic Committee has granted the ICAF an exclusive license to use "Arts Olympiad" and related marks.

Donations from creative and concerned individuals are the primary source of support for the ICAF. The ICAF sponsors include the world's most creative companies – Adidas, Disney, LEGO and Yahoo!

Recognition and governance

In 2000, the ICAF was presented Bravo's National Art Education Award and in 2004 the Peter F. Drucker Award for Nonprofit Innovation (Honorable Mention) and World Cultural Open's Exemplary Humanitarian Service Award.

The ICAF Executive Board has fiduciary responsibility and oversees all operations. Prominent educators, artists and business leaders serve on the Advisory Board. The Youth Board is comprised of some of the most creative and imaginative children and young people in the U.S. and several countries around the world. At the World Children's Festival, the Youth Board honors creative global leaders with the *World Children's Awards*.