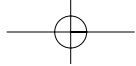


Foreword

The principal of an elementary school in Brooklyn, New York, told a group of researchers studying her school a favorite story that captures some of the advice Dr. Michael Sikes offers in this excellent book on how the arts can engage parents and families in the education of their children. Families at P.S. 130 speak 17 different languages. The school offers family art days to reach across the language and cultural differences that can make the school a daunting and intimidating place for many families. At one of the programs, an artist was teaching Chinese calligraphy. A student and her grandmother, both Chinese, attended the class. The grandmother, who did not speak English, saw that the artist was incorrectly rendering a Chinese character. The principal said the grandmother mustered her courage, walked to the front of the room, took the brush from the artist, and wrote the character correctly. It was a transformative moment, the principal said, not only for the grandmother, who “spoke” through her skill to all those in class, but for her granddaughter, who saw her teach, and to the school personnel who understood the potential for fully engaging her in school activities. The grandmother had never felt comfortable at the school before, blocked by her lack of English. “That experience made her part of the (school) community,” the principal said; it gave her a way to contribute to its life and to the education of her granddaughter. “She was welcomed into the building,” the principal added.

Schools know that they need the active involvement of parents and families if they are to succeed in reaching every child. The question is how to do it. It’s not easy. The school must be a welcoming place that creates both a sense of belonging and contexts within which parents and families feel they are making a constructive—and appreciated—contribution. They need the delight of seeing their children succeed and the knowledge that they play active roles in making that happen in the school and at home.

Dr. Sikes in this book points to the solid body of research that demonstrates the power of the arts to create bonding experiences for schools, families, and students that lead to student achievement. And he draws lessons



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from his own personal and professional successes to provide specific and practical guidance to schools and parents on how to create and sustain those experiences and their impact. This is a much-needed book, and he is to be thanked for writing it.

—Richard Deasy
Director, Arts Education Partnership

Richard Deasy is the coauthor with Lauren M. Stevenson of Third Space: When Learning Matters, a research study of how the arts transform schools by creating communities of learners among students, teachers, and parents.

