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TEXAS CULTURAL TRUST CONVENES STATEWIDE ARTS EDUCATION TASK FORCE

More Than 30 of the State's Top Academics, Educators, Advocates, Philanthropists and Leaders in Arts and Education Assemble to Describe Arts Education Access

AUSTIN, TEXAS (Sept. 4, 2018) – The [Texas Cultural Trust](#), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to be the leading voice for the arts in education, advocacy and economic impact in Texas, recently launched the **Arts Education Task Force** to discuss and clarify what constitutes equitable access to arts education for Texas students with their first meeting Aug. 21 at The University of Texas at Austin.

Funded by Houston Endowment and The University of Texas at Austin College of Fine Arts, the Arts Education Task Force is comprised of more than 30 of the state's top academics, educators, advocates, philanthropists and leaders from the fields of the arts and arts education, including **Dr. Doug Dempster**, dean at The University of Texas at Austin College of Fine Arts; **Professor Roxanne Schroder-Arce**, director of the UTeach Fine Arts program in the College of Fine Arts; **Dr. Brent Hasty**, executive director of MINDPOP; **Dr. Gary Gibbs**, executive director of Texas Commission on the Arts; **Florence Shapiro**, former Texas Senator; **Long Chu**, program officer at Houston Endowment; and **Barbara Cargill**, member of the State Board of Education.

The Task Force's first meeting reviewed the statutory requirements for arts education in Texas and the Trust's previous research through the [Art Can](#) initiative, which provides a statewide portrait of arts access at the district level. The analysis revealed a variance among districts but more importantly illustrated a wide variance among campuses within the same district. These findings demonstrate the need for additional support to define and achieve essential arts education access.

In advance of the 86th legislative session, the Arts Education Task Force aims to develop language that describes equitable arts education access, providing a useful tool for elected officials and local and state agencies to create and implement sound and transparent policy that prioritizes arts education.

“The arts are essential to every student’s education. The Trust’s research has proven that access to arts education decreases dropout rates, increases standardized test scores, and those students with this exposure are more likely to attend college. The arts are also an economic driver for our state, generating more than \$5.5 billion dollars per year in taxable sales,” said Heidi Marquez Smith, executive director of Texas Cultural Trust. “Our first meeting was extremely productive. The Task Force unanimously agreed that Texas students deserve access to quality arts education, and we are committed to advocating for them and the future of our state.”

The Arts Education Task Force will meet again Sept. 25 and Oct. 23 in Austin. To conclude the inaugural meeting, members were asked to identify examples of districts and campuses offering robust arts access in Texas and to describe the features in those examples that characterize robust access. The Task Force will prioritize data-driven evidence of access.

ABOUT THE TEXAS CULTURAL TRUST

The Texas Cultural Trust is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to be the leading voice for the arts in education, advocacy, and economic impact in Texas, spotlighting the artistic excellence of our state. Programs of the Texas Cultural Trust include the Texas Medal of Arts Awards, Texas Women for the Arts, the Texas Young Masters Program, Arts & Digital Literacy, and the Art Can initiative. For more information on the Texas Cultural Trust, please visit www.txculturaltrust.org.

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