



Technical Assistance Report:
**New Orleans Center for Creative
Arts|Riverfront – ArtsExpanded
Project**

222 Richmond Street, Suite 300
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-4226

Phone: 401.274.9548

Fax: 401.421.7650

E-mail: information@alliance.brown.edu

Web: www.alliance.brown.edu

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Prepared by: Gregory Sinner, Ph.D.
Equity and Diversity Division
The Education Alliance at Brown University

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**The Education Alliance
at Brown University
222 Richmond Street, Suite 300
Providence, RI 02903-4226**

**Phone: 800.521.9550
FAX: 401.421.7650
E-mail: information@alliance.brown.edu
Web: www.alliance.brown.edu**

Report Author: Gregory Sinner, Ph.D., School Redesign Specialist

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to work with NOCCA to identify strengths and challenges in their ArtsExpanded (AE) implementation process and to engage in initial action planning. The report is focused on identifying dynamic blueprint tasks or goals to be addressed. The report provides recommendations for strengthening and enhancing the on-going AE implementation process, as a potentially powerful guide for future work. In addition, several appendices provide additional resources for addressing a number of the individual goals. This report is not intended as an exhaustive program assessment nor is it a comprehensive study of all facets of NOCCA. Rather, it is a critical friend review that can produce new insights for the NOCCA leadership and community as it plans the next steps in implementing AE.

The technical assistance provided included the following activities:

Participating in NOCCA leadership and artist-teacher conversations

Participating in ArtsExpanded Team meetings; Board of Directors retreats; a NOCCA Institute Board of Directors meeting; and various informal discussions with a variety of stakeholders about the NOCCA future

Observing classroom and studio activities, student-artist performances and artist-teacher instructional practices

Reviewing existing AE planning documents

Presenting educational best practices and research on successful secondary schools

Project Background

The New Orleans Center for Creative Arts|Riverfront is a world-class educational institution that has been changing the lives of young people since 1973. Every year, this pre-professional arts training center provides intensive instruction in dance, media arts, music (classical, jazz, vocal), theatre arts (drama, musical theatre, theatre design), visual arts, and creative writing, to students from public, private, and parochial schools across Louisiana through schoolday, after-school, weekend, and summer sessions.

The NOCCA Institute is a nonprofit organization that provides financial support and advocacy for NOCCA. Founded in 1982, the Institute oversees a Financial Aid Program, an Artists-in-Residence Program, the CENTER STAGE performance series, and other important initiatives that enhance the quality of NOCCA|Riverfront's educational environment.

In 1997 NOCCA was relocated to its present site at 2800 Chartres Street in New Orleans. Once ensconced in this more modern facility, the NOCCA community began to consider seriously how to expand its program to better serve student-artists.

As a result of the impact of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the resulting disarray of public education for New Orleans, the topic of expanding services at NOCCA took on new urgency.

A team of artist-teachers and administrators was formed, and engaged in more than two years of study and exploration of possibilities. This work was and is open-ended, with the caveat that any proposed changes must have a positive or non-negative impact on student arts training.

Technical Assistance Overview

In October 2007 The Education Alliance at Brown University and the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA) entered into a partnership to create an ArtsExpanded blueprint for the future of NOCCA.

The purpose of this collaborative work was to build a working consensus and a “blueprint” – a document that sets forth a set of tasks-as-goals upon which a more broadly based, holistic, possibly full-day arts training program at NOCCA could be based. In addition, the work was to include a set of recommendations regarding what NOCCA might do initially to implement or “live into” its emerging ArtsExpanded future that builds upon the excellence of its present arts training program.

The terms of this partnership included posting a School Redesign Specialist from The Education Alliance to NOCCA in New Orleans for a total of nine weeks during the four-month period of November 2007 through February 2008.

The intent was for the specialist to: immerse himself in the culture of NOCCA; build relationships with key NOCCA stakeholders and stakeholder groups; review existing written information and strategic planning documents; and engage in instructive, facilitative and coaching roles with NOCCA’s President/CEO and the Arts Expanded Team as appropriate.

Report Document

This document is a set of possible blueprint tasks in the form of implementation goals for Arts Expanded, with accompanying strengths, challenges and recommendations for the development of an effective holistic arts and academic program of learning and guidelines for assessment protocols. Appendices provide additional information on several of the recommendations.

The report emphasizes the need to maintain the integrity of the present arts training program, and the need to develop an integrative academic program for a diverse set of learners – thereby informing the upcoming Research, Design, and Integration (RDI) process currently being developed by NOCCA and Collective Invention (CI). The RDI work is expected to include embedding the known advantages of arts training and art education, including the powerful relationships between the arts and cognition writ large. (See “Insights Gained Into Arts and Smarts,”

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/03/12/27arts_ep.h27.html?print=1)

Future utilization of recommendations in this report is the decision of NOCCA and CI.

Finally, the report is organized around goals upon which the upcoming RDI process may be developed: Vision and Mission; Admissions, Equity and Diversity; Role of ArtsExpanded Team; Program of Learning/Organization; Support for Student Learning; Louisiana Education Mandates; Assessment; Partnerships; and Professional Development.

PRIORITIES & PROGRESS REVIEW

This table displays proposed implementation blueprint goals and accompanying NOCCA strengths and challenges:

Blueprint Goals	Successes	Challenges
<p>Goal 1 – VISION & MISSION Establish definitive statements of the vision and mission of ArtsExpanded</p>	<p>Stakeholder groups are engaged in dialog that is likely to result in clear, coherent vision and mission statements.</p>	<p>Statements continue to evolve as they are considered by each stakeholder group, leading to a lack of clarity regarding which statements are definitive</p>
<p>GOAL 2 – ADMISSIONS, EQUITY AND DIVERSITY Establish equity and diversity goals for recruiting and admission of students, as well as teachers and staff; and create review processes to ensure that these goals are met.</p>	<p>NOCCA continues its efforts to make possible an increasingly diverse student population, especially since Hurricane Katrina resulted in a decrease in the enrollment of minority student artists NOCCA is sensitive to the perception by some that it has been or is in danger of becoming an “elitist” school and works diligently to overcome this perception</p>	<p>Focused, dedicated initiatives to seek out qualified student & teacher candidates, often from unlikely sources need to be developed Currently, most NOCCA students are enrolled because they and their parents seek out the opportunity Many students may require additional academic and social support for learning (see Goal 5)</p>
<p>GOAL 3 – ROLE OF AE TEAM Clarify the emerging role of the ArtsExpanded team as NOCCA moves from planning to implementation of AE</p>	<p>The AE Team demonstrates that as a group it is committed to implementing ArtsExpanded Several members of the AE Team have stated that they are willing to consider assuming new roles</p>	<p>The upcoming, end-of-year change in institutional leadership may make addressing this issue challenging In addition, key academic-teacher-leaders need to be hired and added to the AE Team</p>
<p>GOAL 4 – PROGRAM OF LEARNING & ORGANIZATION Establish an integrative, holistic program of learning, and an accompanying, supportive organizational infrastructure</p>	<p>Faculty & staff agree that this essential work urgently needs to be addressed and will likely require the assistance of outside intermediaries Faculty & staff agree that for coherence an organizational infrastructure must co-evolve with the program of learning All agree that the current arts training program is the central organizer for this and other work All agree that additional learning supports are likely to be required for more diverse learners to be successful</p>	<p>Additional, key personnel for engaging in this work have not yet been hired Meeting this goal must be accomplished in the context of Federal and State education regulations for public secondary education</p>
<p>GOAL 5 – SUPPORT FOR STUDENT LEARNING Provide a systemic program of academic and social support for learning</p>	<p>Student services personnel as well as other stakeholders recognize that in order for all students to be successful in holistic arts training and academies, many may require additional, ongoing academic and social support for learning</p>	<p>NOCCA does not now have the capacity to become the students’ home high school; additional support systems will be required for student success across a holistic program of learning & life after NOCCA</p>

Blueprint Goals	Successes	Challenges
<p>GOAL 6 – LOUISIANA EDUCATION MANDATES Determine which education regulations apply & must be met or modified in order for AE to meet its own program goals</p>	<p>All stakeholders are aware of this important and potentially difficult set of issues Informal conversations between NOCCA personnel, LA Board of Elementary & Secondary Education and other officials have been held</p>	<p>Currently, no individual or group has been assigned to address and pursue this task</p>
<p>GOAL 7 – ASSESSMENT Generate systemic qualitative and quantitative information regarding student performance & for continuous AE program improvement</p>	<p>Stakeholders are aware of the need for such a system and preliminary discussions have been held Principles, as well as models of assessment methodologies to achieve both purposes exist and are in operation in a variety of innovative schools and learning settings</p>	<p>Principles and guidelines for the development of formal system of student performance assessment and data for continuous program improvement have not been adopted for AE</p>
<p>GOAL 8 – PARTNERSHIPS Continue to engage parents, other arts agencies, local businesses and youth organizations to support ArtsExpanded</p>	<p>NOCCA has had great success in meeting this partnership goal in the past 2007 Trumpet NOCCA Brand Planning Session Report contains information relevant to “...expanding the brand’s reach and educating on its benefits...”</p>	<p>Transformation of NOCCA to NOCCA Expanded requires constant and forward-looking communication and engagement of parents and outside agencies to solicit ideas & support, and to ensure that they do not feel left out of the process</p>
<p>GOAL 9 – PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT Ensure that all personnel who are in changing or emerging roles have adequate internal support and, if necessary, from outsider intermediaries</p>	<p>Artist-teachers report that NOCCA has demonstrated great success in providing resources for them to learn and grow in their specialty.</p>	<p>Activities such as the collaborative development of a program of learning, an advisory program for all students and systemic use of multiple instructional strategies may require on-going external support</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

NOCCA seeks to create ArtsExpanded, a holistic, 400 student, grades 9-12 secondary school program of arts training, college preparatory academics and student support. The vision and mission of ArtsExpanded is to integrate arts training with other academic studies into a holistic program of learning that educates the whole student and prepares students for subsequent professional arts training and college admission. The following recommendations are offered as actions to take in order to address some of the key issues:

1. Engage key stakeholders to define and reaffirm the vision and mission of ArtsExpanded; utilize these definitive, written statements for evaluation and decision-making regarding all AE issues.
2. Establish equity and diversity goals for admission of students, and recruiting teachers and staff; create measurable objectives and processes to ensure that these goals are met. (Appendix A)
3. Develop the role of the ArtsExpanded Team to become that of an AE implementation steering committee, with an internal structure such that:
 - a) Sub-committees are created to lead and address selected tasks such as: teacher hiring, program of learning/organization, admissions, LA regulation, assessment, and a residential component; and
 - b) Faculty ownership of the ArtsExpanded project is increased by increasing the number of members of the ArtsExpanded Team to include one new member of the faculty for membership on each of the subcommittees formed.
- 4a. Create, design and develop integrative curriculum and utilize multiple instructional strategies by: establishing interdisciplinary teaching and learning teams within or across levels and curricular areas; and visiting schools where this organizational pattern is being employed successfully. (Appendix B)
- 4b. Hire three academic-teacher-leaders in mathematics, science and the humanities to collaborate with artist-teacher-leaders to begin addressing Recommendation 4a. and to develop organizational structures, patterns and processes to support delivery of this program of learning, *by design*. (Appendix B; see also Marshall, "The Power To Transform," Jossey-Bass (2006))
5. Create conditions to build purposeful relationships by providing academic and social support for learning through a staff-led, student peer support group (advisory) program for all students; and visit schools where this organizational structure is being employed successfully. (Appendix C)
6. Prepare to offer the highest level of the LA high school diploma – by establishing staff responsibilities and priorities for addressing issues of meeting or modifying Louisiana education statutes, policies and procedures; and be prepared to offer evidence that skills learned through arts training also enhances student success in their academic studies.
7. Create an assessment system that provides for periodic, ongoing qualitative information and quantitative metrics with respect to a) local, performance-based assessment of student work for promotion; and b) continuous, overall AE program improvement. (Appendix D)
8. Continue to engage parents, other arts agencies, local businesses and youth organizations in partnerships to support student-artists and the ArtsExpanded program.
9. Continue to investigate the implications and pros and cons of creating an AE residential component; consider implementing a pilot residential program for a small number of students.

10. As the need arises, ensure that resources are available for on-going, outside instructional and facilitative services to in-house staff for new, emerging work and changing individual roles in the following areas: AE Team working-as-implementation-steering-committee; developing an advisory program; artist-teacher-leaders and academic-teacher-leaders working together to create a program of learning and supporting organization, *by design*; establishing equity and diversity goals; meeting the needs of English language learners and students who are eligible for special education services; and establishing assessment goals, objectives, criteria and processes.

APPENDIX A

ADMISSIONS, EQUITY AND DIVERSITY (Goal 2)

Admissions – The goal of the admissions policy should be to establish a clear and transparent admissions process that to the extent possible accommodates both current NOCCA students and, over time, creates a student body that renews each year with a cohort of 90-100 rising eighth graders. The current arts admissions process remains unchanged; an equitable academic recruiting and selection process that invites a competent and diverse incoming student population remains to be established.

Current NOCCA Students – High school students who are currently enrolled in NOCCA’s arts training programs are “grandfathered” into the Expanded program and may choose either a) automatic admission to continue their arts training work and address their remaining, additional Louisiana state high school diploma requirements at NOCCA Expanded; or b) remain enrolled in their home high schools, but complete their arts training at NOCCA as before. Only those students who are currently enrolled and in good standing at NOCCA as of [date] may avail themselves of either option a) or option b). All new incoming students are expected to begin their studies as rising eighth (or ninth) graders, the after school workshop and access program notwithstanding.

First Cohort of New Students – Students who have completed eighth or ninth grade and are Louisiana residents are eligible to apply for admission to NOCCA Expanded. The application process begins late in the fall semester of the preceding year; application materials are distributed to the Guidance Departments in all Louisiana public and independent middle and junior high schools and high schools, and are also available directly from NOCCA upon request. Active recruiting for a diverse pool of talented student-artists who are competent academically is ongoing.

The initial group of new grade nine and ten students (rising eighth and ninth graders) is defined as the first cohort of newly admitted full-time students. In subsequent years, a single cohort of 90-100 eighth graders (only) will be admitted, such that the fully enrolled NOCCA Expanded is comprised of 360-400 full-time students being enrolled in two “houses” – where the [exploratory?] house is comprised of students who would be enrolled in grades nine and ten, and the [mastery?] house is comprised of students who would be enrolled in grades eleven and twelve in a regular high school.

Recruiting for Diversity – There are many sources of information about equity and diversity. For example:

The Harvard University/UCLA Civil Rights Project is an effort “...to achieve racial and ethnic equity as society moves through the great transformation of the 21st century. We believe that either the country will learn to deal effectively with the richness of its astonishing diversity or it will lose pace in a globalizing world and decline and divide. Focused research and the best ideas of scholars and leaders from all parts of the country can make a decisive contribution to a renewal of the promise of the civil rights movement.” <http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/>

The Kent (WA) School District’s Alliance for Equity and Diversity is an award-winning initiative that “...promotes diversity education and multicultural awareness among students, the school board, administrators, teaching and classified staff, committees, parents and the community.” <http://www.kent.k12.wa.us/webnav/directory.aspx?LinkId=528>

The Utah State Office of Education has established “Principles for Equity for Utah’s Public Schools,” which is a good source of information regarding all aspects of learning and schooling, from policies at the district and school level to learning and teaching practices in the classroom.

<http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/equity/principles.htm>

In addition to the foregoing sources of education-oriented information, the following is a list of challenges that companies often encounter in their employee Diversity Recruiting Programs (DRP). The list represents a business perspective, but NOCCA may experience some of these challenges as it expands upon its own efforts to better serve historically underserved populations:

1. Goals aren’t clear – Organizations, and the program directors themselves, often have not articulated explicit goals for their program(s). If the purpose and goals of each program aren’t clear, it is extremely difficult to assess what constitutes success and/or effectiveness of the program(s)
2. Lack of a strong business case - The recruiting team failed to make a convincing "business case" to individual managers that diversity has a direct economic impact on their ability to produce results
3. Underutilizing referrals - DRPs underutilize referrals as a primary source for identifying candidates. This underutilization comes from an unfounded fear that referrals cannot produce diversity candidates, or that targeted referral programs constitute discrimination
4. No rewards - A lack of significant rewards for recruiting diverse candidates sends a clear message that diversity recruiting isn’t a priority, and therefore managers and recruiters fail to focus on it
5. No innovation in tools and strategies – DRPs traditionally benchmark against each other and as a result, the tools and strategies they utilize vary very little. In a rapidly changing world where job hunting has changed dramatically the tools and strategies that are used must be constantly updated to remain effective
6. Weak recruiters - The people that run and staff DRPs, no matter how well-intentioned, are all too often not experienced or trained "executive search type" recruiters
7. Little market research - DRP administrators often fail to make use of the latest market research and sales techniques to diagnose and improve upon their existing diversity recruiting systems. In addition, they fail to do the minimum amount of necessary market research to identify the specific "decision criteria" used by diverse candidates to select a new job opportunity
8. Weak metrics – Most programs lack periodic performance metrics (numerical measures) that are needed for continuous process improvement. Gathering and reporting metrics also sends a message to managers that diversity recruiting is important
9. Focus on active candidates - Most programs have as their primary focus attracting "active" candidates rather than "poaching" currently employed diverse people from other firms. These “passive” candidates are not currently looking for a job but do meet and in many cases exceed a firm’s job requirements
10. Not enough emphasis on orientation and retention – No matter how effective a DRP is at attracting and hiring candidates, it is impossible to achieve the overall objectives of a world-class program without giving serious consideration to the orientation and retention of diverse candidates

<http://www.multiculturaladvantage.com/recruit/staffing/Diversity-Recruiting-is-a-Failure.asp>

APPENDIX B (Goal 4)

PROGRAM OF LEARNING/ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Principles of Design*

The following principles should support and inform the design of NOCCA Expanded:

- Learning to use one's mind well – NOCCA Expanded focuses on helping young people learn to use their minds well and achieve excellence in arts training. It is holistic, but not "comprehensive" at the expense of NOCCA's central creative, artistic and intellectual purpose.
- Less is more, depth over coverage – NOCCA Expanded's goals are straightforward: each student masters a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program's design is shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that the students need, rather than by "subjects" as conventionally defined. The aphorism "less is more" dominates: curricular decisions are guided by integration with the arts and by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort to merely cover content.
- Goals apply to all students – NOCCA Expanded's goals apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary. Instructional practice is tailor-made to meet the needs of every group or class of students.
- Personalization – Teaching and learning is personalized to the maximum feasible extent. To capitalize on this personalization, decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students' and teachers' time and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogical approach is unreservedly placed in the hands of artist-teacher and academic-teacher leaders and the President of NOCCA.
- Student-as-artist, teacher-as-mentor – The governing practical metaphor of NOCCA Expanded is student-as-artist, rather than the more familiar metaphor of teacher-as-deliverer-of-instructional-services. Accordingly, a prominent pedagogy is coaching, to provoke students to learn how to learn and thus to teach themselves.
- Demonstration of mastery – Teaching and learning are documented and assessed with tools based on student performance of real tasks. Student-artists not yet at appropriate levels of competence are provided intensive support and resources to assist them quickly to meet those standards. Multiple forms of evidence, ranging from ongoing observation of the learner to completion of specific projects, are used to better understand the learner's strengths and needs, and to plan for further assistance. Student-artists have opportunities to exhibit their expertise before family and community. The diploma is awarded upon a successful demonstration of meeting departmental goals. As the diploma is awarded when earned, NOCCA's program may proceed with no strict age grading and with no system of credits earned by "time spent" in class. The emphasis is on the students' demonstration that they can do important things.
- A tone of decency and trust – The tone of NOCCA Expanded explicitly and self-consciously stresses high expectations and decency (the values of fairness, generosity and tolerance) in a nurturing and supportive environment.
- Commitment to the entire school – The President, artist-teachers and academic-teachers perceive themselves as generalists (artists, teachers and scholars) as well as specialists (expert in but one particular discipline). Faculty expect to assume multiple obligations (teacher-mentor-counselor-manager) and demonstrate a sense of commitment to NOCCA Expanded writ large.
- Resources dedicated to teaching and learning – Ultimate administrative and budget targets support student loads that promote personalization, substantial time for collective planning by artists and teachers, and competitive salaries for faculty and staff.

- Democracy and equity – As a special purpose secondary school, admission to NOCCA Expanded is based on audition-requiring evidence of artistic excellence and certain academic requirements. Nonetheless, NOCCA Expanded demonstrates non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies. It models democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the program. The school honors diversity and builds on the strength of its communities, deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequity.

*These principles derive from The Coalition of Essential Schools' Common Principles, which are based on decades of research and practice and reflect the wisdom of thousands of educators successfully engaged in creating personalized, equitable, and academically challenging schools for all young people. http://www.essentialschools.org/pub/ces_docs/about/phil/10cps/10cps.html

Organization – NOCCA Expanded could consist of two “houses” of students and teachers: (exploratory) House I and (mastery) House II. New students enter House I. Arts training and academic learning experiences in House I are grounded in the context of what students already know and can do; all students are members of staff-led peer support groups (advisories). N.B.: It is recognized that students often progress at different rates in arts training and in the different academic disciplines. Thus, students may advance to higher levels of instruction and learning at different rates as well, but *promotion* from House I to House II and from House II to graduation are formally recognized and celebrated events upon student fulfillment of all House requirements.

Expectations for student-artists during the first two years in House I are presented in learning experiences in foundational arts training and freshman and sophomore academics that include the highest level of the State of Louisiana required high school curriculum skills, knowledge and understanding. Personalized student learning plans are developed; communication with parents is established and maintained; and multiple instructional and assessment strategies are employed for learning.

A portfolio of accumulated work documents student progress. This work must meet established learning standards, and promotion to House II is based on meeting or exceeding requirements for a satisfactory portfolio and successful demonstration of application of learning. Students are expected to complete all of their House I work within two years, although some may do so more quickly and others may take longer in the different disciplines. All students must be enrolled in House I for a minimum of one year and are expected to complete the work in less than three years – in order to be promoted to House II.

After successfully completing and exhibiting their work, students are then promoted to House II, where they focus on mastery and application in their art, and meet or exceed departmental and other expectations in the study of the final two years of advanced secondary school-level academics. Advanced arts training and academic classes, independent study, dual enrollment in college courses, on-line learning, off-campus mentorships and apprenticeships, etc., characterize House II work. A cumulative Graduation Portfolio of standards-meeting work marks progress; and two exhibitions of applied learning, including a final, juried Senior Exhibition are required.

Daily/Weekly Schedule – In general, flexible schedules best serve holistic and integrative learning and teaching. Longer and shorter classroom, laboratory and studio times are needed for various instructional and study tasks; there must be time for teacher collaboration; student support meetings; and parent, governance and professional development meetings to name but a few demands on the schedule. For example: NOCCA Expanded core faculty could teach from 8-4 and then have adjunct faculty teach the After School & Saturday Access Program. Foundation Level students could have Art in the morning (while the Upper Level students have academics); and then flip-flop for the afternoon sessions (Upper

Levels have Art while Foundation Levels have Academics). Regular, brief (10-15m) morning and evening gathering times would be used by advisory groups for connections and reflections; one day per week could be a short day for Interludes, special advisory, governance and activities programming with students leaving after lunch, allowing time for faculty and other adult business that requires their presence to take place during the school day.

APPENDIX C (Goal 5)

ADVISEMENT

In addition to their arts and academics, every student should be required to be a member of a staff-led, student peer support group (advisory). Normally, a student remains in the same group with the same leader during her or his time in each House for continuity. Each full-time artist-teacher and academic teacher is responsible for a group of not more than 15 students. The purpose of these support groups may be multi-faceted, but must be clearly stated. For example: each advisory group could be responsible for planning and supporting student learning via personalized student learning plans, portfolio development and effectively communicating with parents, but they may also engage as a group from time to time in recreational activities.

Groups would meet frequently within the daily/weekly schedule; each advisor is expected to be the one person on campus who knows well – and is known well by – her or his student-advisees. Membership in a staff-led peer support group is required of all students. For a detailed explanation of creating, designing and developing an advisory program, See “Changing Systems to Personalize Learning Series: The Power of Advisories,” by Debbie Osofsky, Gregory Sinner and Denise Wolk (2003), which can be found at http://www.alliance.brown.edu/db/ea_catalog.php#C; as well as the products and services of the Educators for Social Responsibility non-profit organization at <http://www.esrnational.org>

APPENDIX D (Goal 7)

ASSESSMENT

Feedback on program effectiveness and student engagement and achievement at NOCCA Expanded should focus on two essential interconnected tasks: Acquisition and analysis of appropriate qualitative and quantitative data for learning program improvement; and evaluation of student work to mark achievement, progress and promotion. NOCCA must develop criteria and processes for each component. A credible, dynamic and effective assessment program is an essential systemic requirement for in-flight course corrections, sustaining success and maintaining support in any organizational change initiative, such as NOCCA ArtsExpanded.

The following statement is an excerpt from Linda Darling-Hammond's Testimony before the House Education and Labor Committee on the Re-Authorization of No Child Left Behind, 10 September 2007 and reflects her current research regarding the assessment of student work (<http://www.forumforeducation.org/foruminaction/index.php?page=399>:

"...high-achieving nations focus their curriculum on critical thinking and problem solving, using examinations that require students to conduct research and scientific investigations, solve complex real-world problems in mathematics, and defend their ideas orally and in writing. In most cases, their assessment systems combine centralized (state or national) assessments that use mostly open-ended and essay questions and local assessments given by teachers, which are factored into the final examination scores. These local assessments – which include research papers, applied science experiments, presentations of various kinds, and projects and products that students construct -- are mapped to the syllabus and the standards for the subject and are selected because they represent critical skills, topics, and concepts. They are often suggested and outlined in the curriculum, but they are generally designed, administered, and scored locally.

"...Locally managed performance assessments that get students to apply their knowledge to real-world problems are critically important to the teaching and learning process. They allow the testing of more complex skills that cannot be measured in a two-hour test on a single day. They shape the curriculum in ways that ensure stronger learning opportunities. They give teachers timely, formative information they need to help students improve -- something that standardized examinations with long lapses between administration and results cannot do. And they help teachers become more knowledgeable about the standards and how to teach to them, as well as about their own students and how they learn. The process of using these assessments improves their teaching and their students' learning. The processes of collective scoring and moderation that many nations or states use to ensure reliability in scoring also prove educative for teachers, who learn to calibrate their sense of the standards to common benchmarks.

"...Multiple Measures and Performance Assessments. The proposals in the [NCLB] re-authorization draft to permit states to use a broader set of assessments and to encourage the development and use of performance assessments are critical to creating a globally competitive curriculum in U.S. schools. We need to encourage our states to evaluate the higher-order thinking and performance skills that leading nations emphasize in their systems, and we need to create incentives that value keeping students in school through graduation as much as producing apparently high average scores at the school level.

"Many states developed systems that include state and locally-administered performance assessments... Not coincidentally, these include most of the highest-achieving states in the U.S. on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Indeed, the National Science Foundation provided millions of dollars for states to develop such hands-on science and math assessments as part of its Systemic

Science Initiative in the 1990s, and prototypes exist all over the country. One such measure -- a science investigation requiring students to design, conduct, analyze, and write up results for an experiment -- currently used as a state science assessment in Connecticut (a top-ranked state in both science and writing) is included with the assessment examples in Appendix A [of LDHs testimony].

“Researchers learned that such assessments can be managed productively and reliably scored with appropriate training and professional development for teachers, along with moderation and auditing systems, and that teaching and student achievement improve when such assessments are used.” (Emphasis added.)