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PRESS CONTACT

Echo Olander
KID smART
504-940-1994
echo@kidsmart.org

New Orleans Wins Prestigious Planning Grant for Arts Education

(New Orleans, LA)—New Orleans continues its path as a leader in next-generation education as the newest participant in the *Any Given Child Initiative*. The [John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts'](#) program, [Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child](#), has selected New Orleans as the 16th city in which to develop a strategic plan for K-8 arts education. The initiative is the result of efforts by [KID smART](#), the [City of New Orleans](#), the [New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation](#), and other leading arts and educational organizations.



The Kennedy Center launched the *Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child* program in 2009 to help cities address the urgent need to restore arts education in schools, which increasingly fall victim to budget cuts. To date, *Any Given Child* has helped [15 cities](#) establish successful plans to reestablish meaningful arts education in K-8 schools.

"The cultural economy of New Orleans is more important now than ever. Our culture serves as the backbone of who we are as a community and the cultural economy injects millions of dollars into our city," said New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu. "*Any Given Child* provides New Orleans with an opportunity to collaborate on an educational future that includes a strong emphasis on the arts – supporting 21st Century learning skills students need to succeed in a global society, as well as the rich cultural heritage that defines our city."

New Orleans's *Any Given Child* project was initiated by KID smART, the Mayor's Office of Cultural Economy, the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation, Tulane University's Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives, the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts (NOCCA) and Artist Corps.

Any Given Child provides an opportunity for stakeholders throughout the city to join hands to support an education that includes the arts. The effort is especially challenging because of the decentralized school system in New Orleans, where more than 90 percent of public school students attend independently-operated charter schools.

“New Orleans is known for its vibrant music community and rich culture. This initiative brings together leadership throughout the city, who will work together to ensure that children in the participating schools receive learning experiences and opportunities in the arts from kindergarten through eighth grade,” said Kennedy Center Vice President of Education Darrell M. Ayers. “An ongoing, consistent arts education improves students’ intellectual, personal, and social development.”

The first phase of the program is a comprehensive audit of existing arts education resources and a needs assessment by Kennedy Center staff and consultants in collaboration with a committee of local leaders. Based on this information, a plan is created to bring more access to arts education for all K-8 students. Phase one of *Any Given Child* is administered by KID smART and funded by the Mayor’s Office of Cultural Economy and the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation

“In a rapidly changing global society, we need to prepare all children for success by building, not only their knowledge, but also their creativity, confidence and critical thinking skills. The power of the arts is in building and supporting these skills,” said Celeste Coco-Ewing, Chairman of the Board of Directors of KID smART, the local coordinator for *Any Given Child*.

During phase two of the program, a committee of community members will make recommendations to schools and local arts groups on how to best implement the plan, focusing on increasing arts opportunities for K-8 students.

[Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child](#) is funded by David and Alice Rubenstein, and the National Endowment for the Arts, with additional support provided by David Gregory and Beth Wilkinson; the President's Advisory Committee on the Arts; and the U.S. Department of Education.

KID smART’s mission is to engage children in dynamic, creative and rigorous learning through the Arts. **For more information about *Any Given Child* and KID smART please visit www.kidsmart.org.**