

**Speaker:** Thomas Reynold, Director of the Arts Education Network of Ontario (AENO)

**Title/Headline:** Arts Matter! A Future for Creativity means a Future for Canada

**Organization:** Arts Education Network of Ontario

**Audience and context:** The speech will be delivered to a room of people with power, influence, and money, from the worlds of politics, business, finance, technology, science, and the arts. They are industry leaders and founders, CEOs, and entrepreneurs with an established and self-declared interest in (and financial means to support) the organization and its initiatives. Many of them are already sponsors of the organization (some are themselves board members), while others are new, prospective sponsors attending this kind of event for the first time.

**Event and venue:** A fundraising event (to raise funds for initiatives administrated by the AENO), held at the Harbourfront Centre in Toronto.

**Set up:** The speaker receives a brief introduction by the event's M.C., after which there is some applause; the speaker walks to the podium and says "thank you very much," and then begins his speech.

I have an important question for you [pause]: When you think about the future, what matters to you most? Good health? Financial success? A safe, united, and green world?

Many of us might think of these as things we can control, but, in reality, so much of our future relies upon the prosperity, ingenuity, and leadership of the next generation.

So, what are we doing to ensure *their* success?

Well, as research has shown us time and time again, education is the key. And not just **any** education but a **diverse** education—the kind that creates the sort of well-rounded, prepared, and successful people who are in this room today.

I'm Thomas Reynold, director of the Arts Education Network of Ontario, and I'd like to extend a very warm welcome to all of you, and to thank you for taking the time to be here and lend your support. Today I'd like to prove the value of your investment in our organization by sharing with you **clear** evidence that—when it comes to the future—a diverse education is one in which **the arts matter**.

Recent studies in both Canada and the US have shown the ongoing damage caused by cuts to arts-education-funding, like those that have sliced into Ontario's schools and universities in the last few years. Students deprived of access to the arts suffer a steep drop in skills vital not only to professional success but to life in general: poorer levels of literacy, less empathy for others, more getting into

trouble, and a big decline in levels of interest, ambition, and self-motivation—sobering results that do **not** bode well for a new generation of future leaders. These statistics also reinforce what our organization has long maintained: that students need a diverse education that incorporates the arts, and that this diversity should be present at **all levels** of learning. The best arts education is one that includes a wide range of arts, whether that's visual arts like painting, sculpture, and photography; cultural or humanitarian arts like history, philosophy, and literature; applied arts like graphic design and architecture; or performing arts like theatre, music, and film.

And there's plenty of evidence from the world of successful people **like you** that the top skills gained from an arts education—leadership, innovation, communication, and collaboration—will be even **more** vital for your counterparts among the next generation.

For example: some might think that world leaders succeed through a mastery of politics alone. But the **arts** can help to create culturally-informed, open-minded, and compassionate leaders who care about people, engage with their communities, and fight against social injustice—abilities that will be crucial as we move further into an increasingly anxious century. The arts foster critical thinking, challenging us with different points of view and showing us how to empathize with others. One of the most visionary and influential leaders in modern history—Martin Luther King, Jr.—studied theology and philosophy, the same subjects (together with English literature) that helped to shape another inspiring and unifying leader, Barack Obama.

What about great inventors and thinkers, like Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, or Elon Musk? Some might think of their achievements as rooted solely in the study of STEM subjects. Einstein is famous for his contributions to these fields, but few are aware that the **values** at the core of his scientific feats are **cultural** ones: an understanding of human motivations, relationships, and values. And did you know that Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple and revolutionizer of human experience, started out studying the humanities and took liberal arts classes throughout his career?

[pause] The arts help to foster curious, problem-solving, innovative minds who make a quantifiable difference in people's lives.

One of the most iconic communicators of our times, Oprah Winfrey, studied communications before becoming the game-changing business dynamo she is today. As the last few years have taught us **all**, the need for accurate and reliable communication is only going to grow. [pause] Artistic expression is **itself** a primal form of **human communication**, and its key role for us as a way to share knowledge is just as valid today—think of the central position that social media holds in our daily lives, relying as it does on visual, textual, and performative forms of communication. The arts nurture versatile and resourceful communicators who can inspire trust, solve conflicts, and express new ideas in compelling ways.

As everyone in this room will agree, no successful person is an island. The arts make for masters of collaboration, a key twenty-first-century workplace skill. And here's where the performing arts shine! Focused on experiences that require

teamwork to achieve a shared goal, theatre, music, and film can teach us how to work well with others. Some of the most influential collaborators of our time studied the performing arts: the world would be a lot smaller without the co-operative partnership of Larry Page and Sergey Brin, founders of Google: Page credits Google's high-speed triumphs to his early training in music—an art that helped him develop teamwork skills that gave us the internet as we know it.

The Arts Education Network stresses the value of the arts as **part** of a diverse education. And as the examples I've shared with you today clearly show, it's a **rich combination** of educational experiences that lies at the heart of success.

[pause] Recent cutbacks to arts education in Toronto represent an ongoing, international trend—one against which our organization continues to fight. And we can only do it with your help! Let's ensure that Canadian enterprises take the lead as we move into uncharted territory, providing an example for the rest of the world to follow. Simply by being here today you've taken the first step toward safeguarding the success of Canada's next generation. We thank you for being here, and ask you to invest in your own future by investing in what matters **most of all**: the arts.