

ART SAVES LIVES: ART FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

"In times of uncertainty, art is more than beauty. Art has the power to wake people up and serve as a catalyst for meaningful change. It is a compass in turbulent times, pointing the way to the future we want to live in."

Amplifier Foundation



By Nancy Walkup

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In March 2015, the National Art Education Association (NAEA) adopted a position statement on Art Education and Social Justice. It supports the belief that art can provide a meaningful catalyst to engage individuals and communities to take action around a social issue. Because SchoolArts Magazine believes these efforts are so important, we each month we present an arts-based social justice or service learning non-profit organization, such as The Memory Project and Pinwheels for Peace, in a feature we call Focus In.

As the editor in chief of SchoolArts Magazine, I have met many of the people who were instrumental in creating and continuing these valuable programs. Incredibly, most of them were started by only one or two dedicated visionaries, often art teachers. The Internet has enabled many of these social justice projects to grow into global arts-based efforts in which your students can participate.

THE MEMORY PROJECT

The Memory Project was the first arts-based social justice effort I encountered. I met founder Ben Shumacher at an NAEA conference when he asked me to share his efforts in SchoolArts. In visiting an orphanage in Guatemala as a graduate student, he realized that the children he met there would have no photographs or mementos of their childhoods. His solution was to develop a program where he would take and share photographs of children facing challenges with young artists who would create portraits from the photographs. These special gifts would be presented to the children.

The Memory Project has expanded its efforts over time, now inviting art teachers, art students, and solo artists to help cultivate global kindness by creating portraits for children around the world who have faced substantial challenges, such as violence, war, extreme poverty, neglect, and loss of parents. Since 2004 more than 130,000 portraits have been created for and gifted to children in 47 countries. The Memory Project now collaborates with different children's charities around the world to arrange for photographs



to be taken for the process to begin. To learn more how you and your students can get involved, go to <https://www.memoryproject.org/>

PINWHEELS FOR PEACE

The second project I learned about was Pinwheels for Peace, started by two Florida high school art teachers, Ellen McMillan and Ann Ayers. Their simple but elegant idea was to have students make and share paper pinwheels on September 21, International Peace Day. You can register your school and share photographs on their website, <http://www.pinwheelsforpeace.com>. The widespread appeal of Pinwheels for Peace is evidenced in the fact that there is now a Girl Scout patch for it.



AMPLIFIER FOUNDATION

A fairly new social justice effort is from the Amplifier Foundation, started by contemporary artist Shepard Fairey. (You likely recognize Fairey's "Hope" poster of Barack Obama.)

The Amplifier Foundation commissions new social justice art and distributes it in creative ways to reach new audiences. They offer numerous downloads of posters for categories such as the environment, voting rights, gun violence, immigration, science, and more. In partnership with the artists Shepard Fairey, Rommy Torrico, Munk One, and Kate DeCiccio, they also offer free posters and supporting teaching tools (especially useful for graphics and arts teachers). You can check out their Educator Toolkits and free poster downloads, and sign up for the program at <https://amplifier.org/call-for-educators>.

I invite you to explore these projects and find what most appeals to you for your students. Participating in such projects takes your students' hearts, minds, and art far beyond your art room. Perhaps these projects will inspire you to create one of your own.

OTHER ADVOCACY ART OPPORTUNITIES

- [Empty Bowls](#)
- [From the Bow Seat,](#)
- [Students Rebuild](#)
- [The Inside Out Project](#)
- [The International Hexagon Project](#)
- [The Peace Pole Project](#)
- [Unsung Heroes Project](#)

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