

ACF Administration for Children and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES	
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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

TO: Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees and Delegate Agencies

SUBJECT: A Head Start on Picturing America

BACKGROUND:

In February 2008, the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start (OHS) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) agreed to partner in order to distribute Picturing America artworks to 20,000 Head Start centers. Picturing America, an NEH initiative, is designed to provide kindergarten through twelfth grade students and teachers with opportunities to learn about history, social studies, literature, and civics through 40 American masterpiece artworks. To bring these large format, 2' x 3', high quality reproductions of American artworks to life for Head Start staff, parents and children, the Office of Head Start developed *A Head Start on Picturing America Resource Guide*. This Resource Guide offers suggestions and strategies for using each artwork poster with children and families.

The Resource Guide includes:

- background information for each artwork highlighting the art, the artist, and historical perspective;
- conversations and teaching activities to prompt children’s discussion, understanding, and exploration of the artworks;
- suggested age-appropriate educational experiences including vocabulary and books;
- detailed plans for creating a Family Fun Night at the Museum, an event that fosters parent-child conversations and incorporates multisensory exploration of art and history in a fun, family-oriented way; and
- an annotated bibliography connecting children’s books and reference books to each artwork.

INFORMATION:

The 40 Picturing America artwork posters depict painting, photography, architecture, statues, and crafts selected by NEH. These art posters and suggestions from *A Head Start on Picturing America Resource Guide* can be used by Head Start programs to enrich children’s everyday experiences and provide support for specific child outcomes across all domains of learning. The suggested educational experiences work well with various curricula.

Head Start teaching teams, family service workers, family literacy coordinators, parent educators, other Head Start staff, and volunteers may want to collaborate on supporting access to the artworks

and ideas program-wide. *A Head Start on Picturing America Resource Guide* focuses on opportunities to extend the use of Picturing America art work to address family literacy and parent involvement goals. The Guide includes a description of a *Family Night at the Museum*, an event designed to explore art and history in a fun, family-oriented way. *A Head Start on Picturing America* DVD provides a [video](#) of one Head Start program's experiences in hosting a *Family Night at the Museum* event. These family involvement and parent-focused activities demonstrate ways to expand art awareness and appreciation throughout the community. Family-focused experiences give parents and children opportunities to explore the artwork through conversation, creativity, and sensory expression.

Each Head Start Center will receive:

- Two copies of *A Head Start on Picturing America Resource Guide*;
- *A Head Start on Picturing America* DVD; and
- A set of 20 Picturing America art posters, with artworks represented on the front and back of each poster.

In December 2008, shipments of these materials to 10,000 Head Start Centers will begin. Shipments of materials to the remaining 10,000 centers will begin in early March 2009.

RESOURCES:

Additional resources related to the creative arts and ways to use *A Head Start on Picturing America* program-wide will be available on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc>.

Information on the National Endowment for the Humanities' *Picturing America* program and the 40 images are available at <http://picturingamerica.neh.gov>. The Media Resources section includes instructions for downloading the artwork and provides the appropriate citation to be used with each image.

Head Start centers should *NOT* complete an NEH grant application for Picturing America materials. That process is for K-12 schools and public libraries only. However, you may encourage your local public library to apply.

/ Patricia E. Brown /

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