

Visionary Approach

Human beings have always engaged in aesthetic pursuits – whether in ancient rituals or through the visual and written arts – to better understand the world in which they live. The question of what constitutes aesthetics and how best to incorporate a study of the arts in the educational process has provoked a firestorm of debate that began with Plato and is likely to continue well into the 21st century. During the 1960s, the issue of arts education took on new importance. The shock of Sputnik sparked an educational reform movement, which led to the establishment of the arts and humanities endowments by the U.S. government. In 1966, Lincoln Center was awarded a grant for a model program in arts education to give youngsters an understanding of the performing arts and the positive values they represent. This program, which focuses on the feelings and sensibilities of the perceiver rather than those of the creator or performer, became the keystone of current aesthetic education. Soon other cities began developing similar programs. Since the early 1980s, many aesthetic education institutes, which patterned themselves on the Lincoln Center Institute (LCI) philosophy, have formed around the country and internationally. The McCallum Theatre Institute joined the network of Lincoln Center Institute affiliates in 1998. Though proudly autonomous, the institutes are firmly united in their belief that aesthetic education can and will change the lives of all who share in the wondrous journey toward self-discovery through the arts.