



# NEWS RELEASE

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June 29, 2016

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## **COCA HIRES ABBY CRAWFORD AS DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS**

*Key Addition Strengthens Leadership Team as Arts Organization Makes Plans for Future Growth and Success*

(ST. LOUIS, MO) – COCA-Center of Creative Arts announced that Abby Crawford recently joined its senior leadership team as Director of Education School Partnerships. In this role, she oversees the COCAedu division, which encompasses all of COCA's work in schools and has provided arts programming to thousands of students and dedicated educators throughout the St. Louis region since 1992.

Crawford has worked for many years as a classroom teacher, program manager, and designer of teacher preparation and learning experiences in St. Louis, Phoenix, Los Angeles and Houston. She came to COCA from Teach for America St. Louis where she was Director of Pre-Corps Development, launching a regional training institute for all incoming St. Louis corps members.

"Abby's extensive education experience at all levels, especially her background in educator training, will help COCAedu to have an even greater impact," said COCA Executive Director Kelly Pollock. "Our work in schools allows us to reach students who often otherwise wouldn't have access to the arts and provide them with experiences that may change the way they see the world, inspiring a love of learning."

In recent years, COCAedu has become well-known for its contributions in the arts integration space through its Interchange program – which pairs local classroom teachers with experienced teaching artists to improve student engagement and strengthen understanding of subjects such as math, science and language arts.

"I am a firm believer in the power of the arts in the classroom, and benefitted from a robust arts education as a child," said Crawford. "I look forward to leading COCAedu, and continuing to build upon COCA's long and respected reputation for providing arts and arts integration programming in regional schools."

Crawford holds a BA in Political Science and Communication Studies from Texas Christian University and an MAT from Webster University.

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### **ABOUT COCA**

Founded in 1986, COCA is the fourth largest multidisciplinary community arts center in the country and a national leader in innovative arts education. With a mission to enrich lives and build community through the arts, COCA serves 50,000 people of all ages and skill levels, from enthusiastic amateurs to emerging professionals — all taught by a faculty of distinguished arts educators. We provide meaningful arts experiences in our own studios, gallery and theatres as well as in schools, community centers and corporate settings in order to build a vibrant St. Louis that is creative, connected and inclusive. To ensure diversity and inclusion in all of our programs we are committed to eliminating economic and social barriers to participation in the arts.