



Creating a Policy Agenda for Arts Education in Michigan

Background:

To further arts education in Michigan, the SP3 team is developing a state arts policy agenda that will include recommendations for state policymakers to improve K-12 arts education in the areas of student access; accountability; and professional preparation and development. To accomplish this goal, the SP3 team needs your help in selecting policy recommendations that will further arts education and will help galvanize educators, advocates, parents and others in support of these efforts.

The following are possible recommendations based on the results of an analysis conducted by the Arts Education Partnership that highlighted gaps in Michigan policy compared to other states, and the results of a 2012 arts education survey that highlighted the status of arts education in Michigan communities.

During the Arts Education Summit you will have the opportunity to learn more about what's working in other states; what current policy change is underway here in Michigan; and vote on policy recommendations for inclusion in a survey to prioritize and select the final recommendations for consideration by Michigan policymakers.

Student Access

What We Know:

- 108,000 students in Michigan attend schools without any arts education courses.
- 32% of elementary schools provide less than one hour a week of instruction in the arts.
- 12% of Michigan high schools do not offer even the required one credit in the arts needed to graduate.
- Michigan is one of six states that does not require arts education at the elementary and middle school levels.
- 35-40% of schools have no certified arts specialists on staff in music or visual art, and 82-96% of schools have no certified arts specialists in dance or theater.

Possible Recommendations:

- Urge the Michigan legislature to restore the High School one credit fine arts requirement in the Michigan Merit Curriculum.
- Require 90 minutes in arts instruction for each student each week at the public elementary and middle school levels, including 45 minutes each week in visual art and 45 minutes each week in performing arts (music, theatre/drama, and/or dance).
- Encourage the Michigan State Board of Education and MDE to continue the practice of arts integration (K-12) as vital components in a comprehensive arts education.

Arts integration is an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form, and students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject.

- Develop a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) institute for educational leaders to deepen understanding of arts and STEM disciplines as complimentary modes of problem solving and learning. Engage working artists, designers, engineers, and scientists as mentor/models. Use the institute as a vehicle to encourage insertion of the arts in STEM programs and develop a broadly accepted definition of STEAM.
- Increase funding for Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA) to support the Arts in Education Residency Program that introduces or enhances student knowledge of and participation in a particular art form such as dance, theatre, music, creative writing, storytelling, visual arts (including video and graphic design), or traditional folk arts by bringing a professional teaching artist into the educational setting for a designated amount of time.
- Increase funding for MCACA to support Project Grants that fund specific arts projects conducted by non-profit organizations, municipalities and educational institutions and other organizations that utilize the talents and creativity of professional artists or arts educators in all arts disciplines to advance the creative, cultural and economic environment of the state.

Accountability

What We Know:

- To report student progress against state arts standards, 64% of schools use teacher-developed assessments, 17% of schools use district-developed assessments, and 19% of schools report no assessment.
- 37% of schools have not aligned their curriculum with state arts education standards adopted in 1998.
- 13% of schools do not weigh arts education grades equally with grades in other academic areas when calculating grade point averages.
- 35% of schools do not grant honors arts courses equal weight with other honors courses when calculating grade point averages.
- Michigan is one of 34 states to not require state, district or school-level assessment of student learning in the arts.

Possible Recommendations:

- Develop a “creativity report card” to be used by every district. This public reporting system would allow districts to assess their own commitment relative to certain state-defined minimum requirements for arts education.
- Require school districts to weigh arts courses equally with non-arts courses in calculating grade point averages, and in schools where non-arts honors courses receive added weight require the same for arts honors courses.
- Require the equivalent of one year of high school arts instruction for admission into Michigan colleges and universities.

Professional Preparation and Development

What We Know:

- 46% of certified arts specialists receive professional development in arts education.
- 48% of school districts host professional development for arts teachers or planning meetings for arts staff.
- 39% of teachers do not receive continuing education credits for arts education professional development.

Possible Recommendations:

- Educate district-level administrators on the value of arts integration in achieving assessable results for diverse learners in all classrooms.
- Expand opportunities for professional development in the arts for educators.
- Allow continuing education credits for arts education professional development.
- Develop and manage an arts education resource portal to include the following:
 - Data on arts education programs in public and private K-12 schools, afterschool and summer program providers and participation by discipline, age, gender, geography, etc.;
 - Standards-based curricula and resources (e.g., videos, contacts) for school-day and after-school/summer programs;
 - Professional development for teachers and workers in afterschool/summer programs;
 - A portfolio of services, grants, and other resources suitable to a range of school and community education environments—from ready-to-use introductory programs for under-served schools and after-school providers to highly flexible grant support for comprehensive, self-directed school and district arts programs.

Other

What We Know:

- State policymakers do not understand the difference between the arts and academic achievement.
- To further policy work in this arena, arts advocates in other states partnered with state government to create task forces on arts education.

Possible Recommendations:

- Conduct a public/private campaign to policymakers on research relevant to the arts in education and on the connection between the arts and academic achievement.
- Propose a task force on arts education comprised of representatives from K-20, arts organizations, government agencies and state legislators. The charge of the task force would be to identify state policies that would strengthen arts education in Michigan.

