



A SNAPSHOT OF STATE POLICIES FOR ARTS EDUCATION

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This summary is adapted from remarks prepared for the second meeting of the California Arts Education Strategic Task Force on April 9, 2007. It provides an overview of state policies for arts education in two areas: (1) the alignment of standards, curriculum and instruction and (2) teaching quality, assessment and accountability. In both areas of analysis, California examples are highlighted.

The information contained in this summary was compiled from two sources: Artscan, a 50-state database that the Education Commission of the States developed in 2005 to describe state level arts education policy as defined in state statute or administrative code (www.ecs.org) and the AEP State Policy Database, an annual survey of state department of education personnel in all 50 states on state policy and practice, conducted by the Arts Education Partnership (www.arts-aep.org).

I. ALIGNMENT OF STANDARDS, CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Overall, there tends to be a consistency in the approach states have taken to the alignment of standards, curriculum and instruction for arts education, but significant variation exists in the specific requirements. The following summarizes state policies related to (A) arts standards and arts as a core or academic subject; (B) arts instruction; (C) arts as a high school graduation requirement; and (D) arts requirements for college admission.

A. Arts Standards and Arts as a Core or Academic Subject

While all states (with the exception of Iowa) and the District of Columbia have state level content standards for the arts, only about half the states have a specific policy that defines the arts as part of a core curriculum or academic subject. *California* defines in regulation academic achievement to include the fine arts and ties academic achievement to improvement in the quality of education offered in CA public schools.

B. Arts Instruction

Forty-four states and the District of Columbia require that schools or districts teach the arts, but there is wide variation in how and in what ways the law must be carried out. *California* policy describes subjects that must be taught in grades 1-6 and describes subjects that must be offered grades 7-12. The following describes four specific policy areas related to arts instruction:

1. *Optional versus Mandatory Participation* – A majority of states with policies for arts instruction specify that students in elementary grades must receive instruction in the arts while a few other states indicate only that students be offered instruction. Several states differentiate participation by grade level, and unlike California, some address arts instruction for pre-kindergarten and/or kindergarten students.

2. *Specifying the Duration and/or Frequency* – Beyond general policies related to arts instruction, some states have included mandates specifying frequency and/or duration. Additionally, a few states have included requirements about who is qualified to provide such instruction. Examples include the following states:

- *Missouri*: Elementary students must receive 50 minutes of arts instruction by certified teachers; middle school students must have access to art and music for a minimum of 1500 minutes each year; and high schools must offer at least 2 units of credit in fine arts.
- *Arkansas*: Requires as of 2005 that every elementary school provide no less than 40 minutes each in visual arts and music every week taught by a certified teacher in the arts.
- *Ohio*: Grades 8 and below receive at least 80 minutes per week in two or more of the following: arts, health and music.
- *Vermont*: Grades K-5 must provide students with programs at least twice weekly in both arts and PE.

3. *Types of Offerings* – Few states specify in policy, as California does, that instruction in four art forms (visual arts, dance, music and theatre) be offered to or required for all students. Several states specify only visual arts and music as requirements, while others (like Ohio and Vermont described above) lump arts instruction in with other subjects such as health or physical education.

4. *Alignment with Other State Policies* – The following are examples of states where policies for arts instruction are framed in terms of their alignment with other policies related to curriculum, accountability or accreditation:

- *Minnesota* – For district accountability, policy requires that elementary and middle schools offer at least three and require at least two of four arts areas; high schools must offer at least three and require at least one.
- *Maryland* – Each student K-8 must have the opportunity to participate in fine arts instructional programs. Districts are required to provide curriculum guides for elementary, middle and high schools under their jurisdiction.
- *Kansas* and *Mississippi* – A basic curriculum that includes the arts is linked to elementary and middle school accreditation requirements.

C. Arts as a High School Graduation Requirement

Thirty-six states and the District of Columbia either require coursework in the arts or include it as a stated option for high school graduation. *California* requires one course in visual or performing arts or foreign language in grades 9-12, although local districts can augment that requirement.

The following describes some of the variation that exists in state policies:

1. Number of Credits Required – Because there is wide variation among states in the number of credits needed to graduate from high school and in how those credits are calculated, comparisons are difficult. However, the majority of states that have arts as a requirement or option for high school graduation typically specify either one-half or one full credit is needed.

2. Choice of Arts Among Other Subjects – Some states, like *California*, allow students to select from a range of subjects including the arts to fulfill their graduation requirement. For example, *Arizona* and *Connecticut* include vocational or career education along with arts. In *Michigan*, a new law that went in effect in 2006 requires at least one credit in visual arts, performing arts or applied arts beginning with all students entering 8th grade that year.

3. Special Honors – For example, as stated in *North Carolina* policy, students are encouraged, but not required, to include at least one elective course in the arts. However, students who receive special recognition by meeting requirements for NC Academic Scholars Program must have completed one unit in the arts (dance, music, theatre arts or visual arts).

D. Arts Requirements for College Admissions

Individual colleges or systems of higher education may require arts credits for admission to their respective institutions; however, the University of California and California State University Systems, along with the Minnesota State Colleges and University Board, are examples of statewide systems that require completion of one year of arts for admission.

II. TEACHING QUALITY, ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Although state level policies for the alignment of standards, curriculum and instruction are necessary and helpful, the real initiative for change has to be at the school and classroom levels. What are states doing to promote and encourage teaching quality and raise student achievement through arts education in schools? How are states addressing preparation, certification and professional development of the arts teaching workforce and supporting accountability for student learning outcomes in the arts? Definitive answers to these questions will require additional research; however, there are some general findings to report.

A. Preparation and Certification of Regular (non-arts) Classroom Teachers

Thirty-one states and the District of Columbia have state level arts requirements for certification or licensure of elementary level regular classroom teachers. Depending on the state, specific requirements may be determined by the colleges and universities themselves that in turn must meet certification requirements of the state.

1. Coursework Requirements – Some states specify that teacher candidates must complete coursework in the arts. Where states have specified, most require at least three semester hours in the arts for elementary education certification.

2. Knowledge and Skill Requirements – Beyond semester hours required, some states have specified in law or administrative code that elementary teacher candidates must demonstrate competence in the knowledge and skills related to the fine arts. *Kansas*, for example, instructs teacher preparation programs to develop assessment systems to measure statewide educator standards. In a few cases, states have specified knowledge and skills requirements for pre-K teacher candidates in addition to those specified for kindergarten and/or elementary candidates.

B. Certification or Licensure Requirements for Arts Teachers or Specialists

Twenty-six states and the District of Columbia specify requirements for arts teachers or specialists. *California* currently makes provisions for non-credentialed teachers: “Specialized secondary programs may select as teachers persons who possess unique talents or skills from business, performing arts or postsecondary institutions.”

C. Professional Development and/or Recertification Requirements

Although 50-state information is scarce for professional development and recertification policies for the arts teaching workforce specifically, many states have identified in other education policy areas what might be called *investments in teacher learning* – that is, supporting ways in which teachers already in schools can be more effective. For example, some states require that time be set aside for professional development (PD), and in some cases specify the numbers of minutes per week required for PD and planning purposes. Additionally, many states provide some level of resources for PD and some earmark money for specific purposes.

D. Assessment and Accountability

Here again, 50-state information is sketchy. To date, only one state – *Kentucky* – uses a statewide exam to assess student learning in the arts. However, the following eight other states require that districts or schools assess student learning outcomes in the arts: *Arizona, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania* and *Washington*. Some specifics related to assessment:

- *New Hampshire* – Schools must provide for the ongoing assessment of learning outcomes through the use of local assessments aligned with state and district content and performance standards.
- *New Jersey* – District school boards are responsible for assessing and publicly reporting on the progress of all students in developing the knowledge and skills specified by the Core Curriculum Content Standards, which include the visual and performing arts.

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