



Pennsylvania Arts Education Network Public Policy Agenda

All Pennsylvania students, to succeed in school, work, and life, need creativity, critical thinking, cognition, collaboration, cross-cultural understanding, and communication skills. The Commonwealth, in order to grow a competitive, innovation-based economy and foster vibrant, inclusive communities, needs to prepare all students to be successful 21st Century citizens. The Network advocates for the following policy recommendations which will provide a rigorous arts education for all students.

1. The Pennsylvania Department of Education should restore at least one full-time Fine Arts and Humanities Advisor. This position has been vacant since 2010, but is necessary to support quality arts education opportunities for all students and support professional development and technical assistance to educators across the state and to colleagues within the PDE.

2. The General Assembly must provide annual state funding to school districts in 2017-2018 and each year thereafter in an amount, and distributed through a formula, that supports the principles of equity, adequacy, accountability, and predictability. Because Pennsylvania school districts began each of the most recent six school years with hundreds of millions less in state support for student programs and services than in 2010, arts programs for students have suffered some of the greatest cutbacks in both financially struggling and wealthier school districts, with tens of thousands of students having their arts education programs diminished, and more threatened for future years.

3. The Pennsylvania Department of Education should at least annually inform all school districts of eligible uses of Title I, Title II and the newly created Title IV funds to support arts education projects that achieve Title I, Title II and Title IV goals. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) allows for the use of Title I and Title II and Title IV funds to achieve a well-rounded education which by definition within the legislation includes instruction in music and the arts.

4. The Department of Education should establish, and the General Assembly should support, a statewide Arts Education Data System. Such a system should be integrated with other reporting requirements for school entities, report annually on the status, quality and equity of arts education programs and opportunities for K-12 students, and be available for use by policymakers, educators and the public as a guide for accountable, data-informed decision-making

5. State policymakers should reestablish the Governor's School for the Arts, which was canceled as a result of state budget cuts in 2009. For thirty years, the Governor's School exemplified Pennsylvania's leadership in arts education and provided over 10,000 young people with extraordinary opportunities to develop their artistic talents, intellects, self-confidence, and leadership.

6. The Pennsylvania Department of Education should make certain that the value of arts education is represented and explicitly supported in the Pennsylvania ESSA Implementation Plan and that arts educators are included as members of all relevant planning and implementation committees. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 shifts several areas of education policy authority back to states and calls for a return to a well-rounded education including instruction in music and the arts.

7. All school districts should require at least one high school credit in the arts as a graduation requirement. Under Pennsylvania's standards-based graduation requirements, the state does not specify which credit-bearing courses students must pass in order to graduate from high school, but school districts are empowered to do so. Many, but not all, districts already have such a requirement. Arts courses are particularly useful in helping students develop 21st Century Skills of creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication, as well as increasing the odds for students to stay enrolled in school and remain engaged in their school community. This course must be aligned to the state standards.

8. The Governor and General Assembly should approve a 2017-2018 state budget that maintains an appropriation for the Pennsylvania Council for the Arts funded in the General Fund at least at the same level of funding as included in the 2016-2017 General Fund Budget. Funding for the Pennsylvania Council for the Arts benefits in-school and out-of-school arts education programs and services for students and arts educators.

9. The President and the Congress, including specifically members of the Pennsylvania delegation, should support the continuation of federal funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute for Museum and Library Services, at least at the levels most recently appropriated. These three agencies support programs and services that directly benefit valuable arts education programs in Pennsylvania, in schools and in other community organizations.

Adopted by PAEN Steering Committee - April 2017