

Include Arts Education in New School Accountability System

The Arts for All Coalition consists of MASSCreative, Arts|Learning, the MA Cultural Council, EdVestors, Boston Public Schools, Young Audiences of Massachusetts, MassINC, and Project LEARN.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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A New Era Unfolds to Educate our Students

In December, 2015, Congress retired No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the federal law that has guided the nation's educational system for the last two decades. NCLB emphasized instruction in Math and English, coupled with annual testing, as a means of measuring progress. In its place, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Under ESSA, instruction in the arts is now included in the definition of a "well-rounded education." In preparation for implementation of ESSA for the 2017-18 academic year, each state must revise its accountability plan for success in education, which—in addition to test scores—can include other indicators, such as measures of participation in arts instruction.



Arts Education Teaches Core Skills

Arts education fosters critical thinking, cognitive flexibility, innovation, and creativity—frequent descriptors of what's needed to succeed in our fast-changing global economy. Citing a large body of research, the Reinvesting in Arts Education report of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities noted that engagement in the arts through education fosters better habits of mind such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and independence.



Elevate Arts Education by Measuring Participation

One of the unintended consequences of No Child Left Behind has been a national decline in access to and participation in sequential arts education (dance, drama, media, music, visual arts). This decline is especially noticeable in low-income urban and rural districts, resulting in an even greater disparity of educational opportunity.

Massachusetts should put participation in arts education in its new accountability plan. This will ensure that every student in Massachusetts has access to and participates in arts education—not just those who happen to attend schools in well-funded districts. Massachusetts should also encourage districts to use arts education to meet the goals of Title I funding to provide increased educational opportunities to disadvantaged students through arts programs. Title II funds should be used to support the professional development for arts educators. Massachusetts should tap into a \$20 million grant program to integrate arts education into the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) curriculum.



New Regulations to Impact Districts by early 2017

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is currently developing the state's new accountability and assistance plan. As DESE revises this plan for the state's school districts, it is considering whether to include a standard for access and participation in arts education. It is also considering whether to encourage the use of Title I, II, and IV funds for arts education.

Send a note to Commissioner Mitchell Chester at DESE to encourage him to put arts education access and participation into the mix.