


Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

November 20, 2014

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Joshua P. Starr, Superintendent of Schools 

Subject: Governor's P-20 Leadership Council Task Force on Arts Education in Maryland Schools (10-27-14-01)

Question

Mr. Barclay requested that our existing recommendations for arts education be assessed and compared with the Governor's P20 Leadership Council Task Force on the Arts Education in Maryland Schools to determine how MCPS is doing in terms of progress and alignment with the recommendations presented in the report.

Response

Governor Martin O'Malley charged the Governor's P-20 Leadership Council Task Force with the following:

- Examine Maryland policies and regulations on arts curriculum and instruction in the context of the new standards in arts education so as to identify gaps and alignment needs;
- Determine the current status of arts education in Maryland schools;
- Review pertinent research on the impact of fine arts instruction on student success in school; and
- Make recommendations to the Governor's P-20 Leadership Council regarding fine arts education in Maryland public schools to include (a) policy and regulations, (b) professional development, (c) curriculum and instruction, and (d) resource allocation.

On September 16, 2014, the P-20 Leadership Council unanimously approved the 10 recommendations in the final report of the Governor's P-20 Leadership Council Task Force on Arts Education in Maryland Schools. The recommendations, followed by MCPS' responses, are included in this memorandum. The full report is available at www.aems-edu.org. A recommendation and strategy timeline is included in Appendix B of the report.

Recommendation A: *Revise the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) to provide specific direction to local school systems in the consistent implementation of comprehensive fine arts programs in dance, music, theatre, and visual arts for all children at all grade levels.*

The P-20 Task Force recommendations call for new specific language for COMAR found in Appendix D of the report. The new recommended COMAR language regarding student participation in the arts reads, "each student shall participate in the fine arts instructional program (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts) required by this chapter." Proposed changes in COMAR language would be the responsibility of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Response: MCPS is currently aligned with COMAR. If changes to COMAR are made, MCPS will be responsible for developing local policies aligned to the new regulations.

Recommendation B: *Establish a comprehensive, statewide data system that collects elementary, middle, and high school data on fine arts instruction.*

The P-20 Task Force recommends MSDE design and create an appropriate data collection system to ensure transparency and consistent application of COMAR.

MCPS Response: If COMAR is changed, MCPS will provide requested data in the fine arts.

Recommendation C: *Establish a minimum per pupil funding allocation required for and dedicated to comprehensive fine arts programs in dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts for all schools and for start-up funding for new programs in those disciplines.*

The P-20 Task Force found a wide disparity in arts funding across the state and recommends identifying effective funding guidelines by reviewing those established by arts organizations at national, state, and local levels in order to ensure equitable funding practices across fine arts disciplines in each school. They also recommend appropriate levels of central office funding for systemwide program support such as transportation, equipment, and professional development.

MCPS Response: MCPS currently allocates instructional materials funding to the arts in a general allocation for all content areas. Individual school administrators decide how to fund each content area each year based on need.

The fine arts team in central office currently receives funding for music festival adjudication, instrument repair, and instrument purchases for disadvantaged MCPS students. Equipment replacement funding was received in Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 for art, general/choral music, and instrumental music, and in FY 2012 for instrumental music.

Start-up funding for new programs is based on the needs of the program related to space, materials, and equipment. Currently, new programs are opened based on student interest and enrollment. MCPS may need to dedicate central funding for program expansion in order to meet this recommendation.

Additionally, MCPS would need to conduct a review of school requests for equipment replacement, instructional materials, and professional development, as well as costs associated with festivals (e.g., transportation, teacher substitutes, and recordings), in all four fine arts disciplines before recommendations for central funding could be made.

Recommendation D: *Revise the Maryland State Standards for Fine Arts Education.*

MCPS Response: The National Coalition for Core Arts Standards launched the new National Core Arts Standards on June 4, 2014, which may be found at www.nationalartsstandards.org. The recommendation in Appendix A asks MSDE to engage a wide range of stakeholders to discuss and write revisions to Maryland State Standards for Fine Arts.

Recommendation E: *Develop and/or align school system curriculum documents with the revised State Standards in Fine Arts.*

MCPS Response: Once the state standards for fine arts are revised and finalized, MCPS will need to conduct a gap analysis to determine what adjustments to the curriculum are needed and then create a plan for curriculum development and review.

Recommendation F: *Provide central office leadership and support at the curriculum and instruction level so the fine arts have Maryland certified staff assigned supervisory responsibilities.*

The P-20 Task Force recommends identifying certified representatives in each of the fine arts disciplines to support the work of the central office supervisor for guidance on programs and practice, constructing annual budgets that include fine arts educators for central office positions proportionate to the size of the school system, and identifying models for structuring and supporting central office staff in fine arts.

MCPS Response: Currently, MCPS has certified representatives of art and music in central office. Other school districts have identified resource or content teacher level positions that support central office in art, music, dance, and theatre. The table below provides information comparing central office dedicated staff and enrollment size in local counties.

School System	# of Staff Dedicated to Arts Education	# of Students in System
Montgomery	7	153,852
Prince George's	8	125,136
Baltimore County	6	109,984
Anne Arundel	7	78,489
Howard	4	51,681
Fairfax, VA	9	186,785

Recommendation G: *Staff all fine arts classes with Maryland fine arts teachers who have the depth of knowledge and skills necessary to teach the courses to which they have been assigned.*

The P-20 Task Force provides three strategies for this recommendation: a) staff schools according to COMAR regarding certification, b) include central office fine arts personnel in the hiring/staffing process (specifically, screen candidates through the arts supervisor and/or content expert to ensure only those who have deep content knowledge and strong pedagogy before they are moved to the school review is recommended), and c) develop best practices for recruiting and retaining fine arts teachers.

MCPS Response: MCPS has a strong record of hiring highly qualified teachers in the arts. The fine arts team and the Office of Human Resources and Development work closely to interview candidates to determine content knowledge and skill. MCPS is dedicated to the recruitment and retention of high quality fine arts teachers. MCPS has a long history of partnering with local universities to recruit strong candidates. In addition to the consulting teacher support provided by MCPS, the fine arts team provides additional support to new hires through monthly meetings.

Recommendation H: *Ensure that instructional time in all arts disciplines is not replaced or removed to facilitate additional time in another subject area.*

The P-20 Task Force recommends three strategies to ensure students receive appropriate instruction in the arts: a) support school counselors and schedulers with opportunities for increasing their knowledge and understanding of fine arts education; b) develop and disseminate models of effective scheduling of fine arts instruction during the school day; and c) create an ongoing process of sharing research with educators, parents, and the public showing the impact of the arts on academic achievement of students.

MCPS Response: MCPS is dedicated to the goal of all students receiving a high quality education, including one in the arts. One important consideration when scheduling for the arts at the secondary school level is articulation of the program. In order for students to reach the highest level of courses in the arts, attention must be given to the vertical articulation process. Students who miss a year or two of a fine arts program, especially music at the middle school level, find it difficult to reengage in the program in high school. As many fine arts courses are singleton classes, school schedulers need to pursue creative solutions so that students may have access to these singleton classes every year.

MCPS currently provides scheduling guidelines. Each school creates a master schedule, based on School Improvement Plan priorities and student needs. In the current paradigm, students may receive different instructional time in the arts, from school to school.

Recommendation I: *Provide learning opportunities and resources for fine arts teachers to continue the development of skills needed to deliver a comprehensive fine arts program. for*

non-arts teachers to integrate the arts into their disciplines, and for leaders in school systems and in higher education to enhance their knowledge of effective arts education.

The P-20 Task Force identifies seven strategies to support professional learning opportunities. Four of the identified strategies are best applied at the local level: a) convene work groups to analyze research in order to create program guidelines and professional development experiences, b) develop a resource describing the characteristics of quality fine arts programs, c) provide models for effective fine arts integration for non-arts teachers, and d) develop models for utilizing community resources.

MCPS Response: In FY 2015, two professional development half days have been provided with substitute time for secondary school art and music teachers. These professional development days were reinstated based on survey information from art and music teachers requesting professional development specific to their content areas. Elementary school art and music teachers have received substitute time for two professional development half days beginning in FY 2013 using Curriculum 2.0 funding.

MCPS analyzes current research in order to create curricula, program guidelines, and professional development experiences. Resources for Universal Design for Learning, English Language Learners, and gifted and talented learners are embedded in curricula materials. MCPS has created documents that describe the characteristics of a quality fine arts program that include learning environments, staffing, scheduling, and materials for instruction.

MCPS is currently creating a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Maryland to develop an Arts Integration certification or master's program. Coursework would be designed specifically for MCPS and would support the Thinking and Academic Success Skills in Curriculum 2.0 in authentic ways. Arts integration is an educational approach through which arts standards are taught simultaneously with other content standards. The Arts Integration certificate would be for all teachers, not just fine arts teachers.

MCPS currently partners with several community arts organizations to provide instructional enrichment opportunities for students. These partners include, but are not limited to, The Music Center at Strathmore, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Class Acts Arts, Imagination Stage, Arts on the Block, Glenstone, and The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In collaboration with the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County, MCPS has conducted a survey of schools to determine which fine arts organizations are providing additional fine arts experiences for students.

Recommendation J: *Strengthen the quality of fine arts teacher preparation programs.*

MCPS Response: This recommendation was directed toward higher education programs; however, MCPS currently supports student teachers from multiple universities, and engages in

ongoing conversations to provide feedback on teacher preparation and expectations of best practices in fine arts education.

Should you have questions regarding MCPS' response to the P-20 Task Force recommendations, please contact Dr. Erick J. Lang, associate superintendent for curriculum and instructional programs, Office of the Chief Academic Officer, at 301-279-3411.

JPS:MVN:bas

Copy to:
Executive Staff
Ms. Adams
Mr. Creel