

Task Force on Arts Education in Maryland Schools

Meeting Notes

Howard County Center for the Arts

8510 High Ridge Road
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Friday, December 13, 2013, 9:30- Noon

Attendees: Mary Ann Mears, Dr. Jack Smith, Theresa Colvin, Eleni Dykstra, Nancy Highsmith, Martin Knott, Anita Lambert, Dr. Kevin Maxwell, Dr. Stephen Miles, Dr. Khalid Mumin, Christopher Nunzio, Rick Penix, Wayne Ridenour, Lisa Stuart, Sonia Synkowski, Carol Trawick, Jay Tucker

Welcome and Introductions

Mary Ann brought greetings. Task force members introduced themselves and mentioned the constituency they represent. Mary Ann expressed gratitude to Mark Coates and the Howard County Arts Council for hosting the meeting.

Jack also brought greetings and shared how important it is to have an active task force to help inform statewide policy.

Mary Ann discussed the current status of the public outreach effort. She shared that there are three components of the outreach effort: an online survey which presently has 205 responses; a request for data from all school system superintendents; and seven regional forums geographically placed across the State. Each forum is designed to build the support for the work of the task force and at the same time gather important feedback from participants. Mary Ann thanked all of the task force members who helped set up the sites.

She commented that we want widespread engagement in all of these efforts. Task force members need to spread the word and attend at least one forum.

Mary commented briefly on the revised timeline and stated that it is intended to give more time to subcommittees to complete their work.

I. Subcommittee Reports and Discussion

Jack shared that we want to give each subcommittee a chance to discuss where they are with their respective reports. A copy of each report was in the members' folders. A spokesperson for each subcommittee provided highlights for the task force. (See full subcommittee reports in the Drop Box.)

Curriculum and Instruction – Dr. Stephen Miles

There are three major areas being considered by this subcommittee.

1. National Core Arts Standards – The subcommittee expressed concern about the quality of the National Core Arts Standards. They were drafted by volunteers who were not necessarily experts. The current Essential Learner Outcomes in Maryland are very strong. We need to be careful not to lose the fundamental structure and nature of our current outcomes. There needs to be a balance among skill development, collaborative experiences, and creativity
2. Common Core Standards – There is a powerful connection between the capacities of literate individuals and the Common Core Standards. Maryland's Fine Arts Standards need to be tied to the literacy and mathematics standards. The task force needs to help administrators understand the definition of fine arts literacy. We also need to be careful not to lose the content of the art form because of our focus on the Common Core. However, the Fine Arts need to speak the same language in regards to the Common Core as other disciplines.
3. Characteristics of high quality arts instruction – The Danielson framework has been adjusted for Fine Arts. Administrators need to know what quality arts instruction looks like if they are going to be using Danielson. Principals should be provided with best practices in staffing for the arts, examples of outstanding fine arts programs, and what to look for during observations.

Discussion:

Jack mentioned the close connection of the mathematical practices in the Common Core to other disciplines.

Resource Allocation – Mary Ann Mears

1. Dedicated funding – The subcommittee discussed dedicated funding to arts education. Some LEAs are already collecting information on funding, and we need to make sure that central office funding is included. When collecting the data, we also need to make sure we have the sources (internal and external) of funding and the categories of expenditures.
2. Rich arts programs –The subcommittee discussed what constitutes a rich arts program. It should include choices in all art forms. Programs should be deep, broad, and sequential. The arts should be integrated across disciplines. We also need to be able to measure the quality of arts programs.
3. Staffing allocations – We need quality information on staffing patterns, including the ability to compare central office staffing based on the size of the LEA. We also need models of effective staffing so that LEAs have something they can follow.
4. Professional development – We have to look at professional development in light of staffing patterns.
5. Contributions of higher education – One major contribution of the higher education community has been the work of the AEMS Higher Education in the Arts Task Force (HEAT Force), which grew out of the Dean’s Roundtables. We need to get IHEs to look at what they value in arts education. Also, this task force will intersect with the Task Force on Teacher Preparation that is currently being formed. It will be co-chaired by Dr. Jack Smith, Chief Academic Officer at MSDE, and Dr. Timothy Chandler, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Towson University. We will have to work closely with that task force moving forward.

Discussion:

Mary Ann mentioned Dr. Karen Carroll's paper, *What if they believed us?*, which examined the arena of rich arts programs.

There was a concern raised regarding the number of teachers coming from out-of-state and the fact that Maryland has no control over what those IHEs deliver.

Another member commented that we have to develop the mindset that higher education does not produce an end product because teachers continue to learn throughout their careers.

Policy and Regulation – Christopher Nunzio

1. COMAR – Both the content and language of COMAR need to be discussed. Some language nuances are getting in the way. We need to know what is provided in each and every school as well as the number of instructional minutes. COMAR needs to be very explicit about what constitutes a quality fine arts program and how many minutes per art form should be included. The word “opportunity” in COMAR allows for disparities across the state. We also have to stop the practice of taking students out of arts programs for the purpose of remediation. We also need clear language about accommodations for arts students.
2. Certification/Compliance – MSDE collects compliance information; however, it is currently two years overdue. The new longitudinal data system will provide data on what students are taking. The current COMAR regulations dates back to 1989.
3. Graduation requirement – COMAR requires one full credit to graduate. We need to look at increasing that credit requirement, and we need to know the impact of removing an elective credit and replacing it with an art credit.
4. LEA policies, procedures, and programs – MSDE does not currently collect information on LEA policies and procedures. The word “comprehensive” raises questions as related to programs. We need to know scope and sequence, grade level expectations, and required beginning programs. Magnet and signature programs can cause issues with sequential arts programs.

Discussion:

Jay Tucker said there has been a discussion for at least three years about changing COMAR. The intent of the State Board of Education for this regulation was to have children exposed to art, music, dance, and theatre. Traditionally, visual arts and music have been in every school taught by certified teachers. In some systems, some children are also being provided theatre programs at the middle level, and some are getting dance. Where that is not happening, everyone claims they are providing “opportunity”. We may see that a lot of students are already taking more than one credit, but we need more information.

Rick Penix said that we need to show in our report how sequential and sustained arts experiences are necessary. James Catteral’s powerful research demonstrates that students from the lowest socioeconomic level had the highest increase in academic performance as a result of sustained instruction in the arts. If we use the arts as the default for remediation, we are losing them in fine arts, and these are the same kids we need to reach.

- II. Overview of Compelling Research in Fine Arts – MaryAnn introduced Dick Deasy. She commented on Dick’s background and stated that he had elevated the arts in Maryland and nationally. (See Mr. Deasy’s bio and power point in the Task Force Drop Box.)

Dick presented a powerful presentation on the arts titled “The Essential Role of the Arts in 21st Century Teaching and Learning.” He said that he wanted to talk about how school districts feel about the arts. He said Maryland is privileged since there is strong arts support across the State. Dick referred to the *Critical Links* publication that was comprised of 62 peer reviewed studies. He then talked about *Third Space: When Learning Matters*, which shows how special populations are uniquely advantaged through the arts. He described “the imagine nation” as the national policy study that discussed public opinion on a wide variety of arts related topics.

Dick stated his primary interest is in what the arts do for the learner. He provided very strong testimony to the accumulation of evidence that shows how students' capacities are enhanced by the arts. Those capacities include:

- Imagination
- Creativity and innovation
- Symbolic understanding
- Conditional reasoning (theorizing about actions and developing solutions)
- Persistence
- Resilience
- Engaged learning
- Self-identity/Self-efficacy
- Achievement motivation
- Empathy
- Social tolerance
- Collaborative learning and action
- Critical judgment

Dick discussed the relationship between the cognitive sciences and the arts, describing how engagement in the arts contributed to the goal of learning (defined as adaptive expertise – the competence and capacity to apply acquired knowledge and skill in new conditions and settings). Finally, Dick discussed the impressive national survey findings of “the imagine nation.” These results showed overwhelming support for the arts across the nation.

Jim Foran asked how he reconciled the ongoing conversation in the research about causality versus correlation. Dick stated that he thought it was not really a useful distinction in terms of learning. A more useful conversation would be about the research in the behavioral sciences where cause and effect are more easily measured.

III. Discussion – Research Component of the Final Report – Dr. Jim Foran

Jack introduced Jim Foran and asked him to describe the Review of the Literature section of the final report. Jim thanked members of the committee for submitting their citations. He also thanked Mary Ann, Dick, and Mary for their help in that regard. Jim shared that his thinking was that we should organize the Review of the Literature section around designated categories so it had some structure. After much internal conversation with Mary Ann, Dick, and Mary, we adopted the structure proposed by Dick.

The current thinking is that we would have some opening paragraphs to the Review of the Literature section followed by the outline of the organizational structure. Jim suggested that the Review of the Literature section would be anywhere from 30 to 50 pages, including a 12 page bibliography. We need to weigh whether that is too long and thus would overwhelm the report versus the need to make sure we are comprehensive in describing the research to make a strong case for the arts and to support the recommendations from the subcommittees.

The task force members were not concerned about the length because it would be in an appendix. They recommended that there be an abstract at the front of the report to capture the reader's attention.

Jim asked members of the task force to review the current bibliography to see if any important citations were missing. He said he would add Dick's reference to "the imagine nation" research, and it would be helpful if anyone else had other national research suggestions that could be cited in this section.

IV. Subcommittee Meetings

The subcommittees convened in different corners of the room for the remainder of the meeting to continue their discussion and consider next steps.

Mary Ann and Jack adjourned the meeting and thanked task force members for all their hard work. Jack commented that the work of this task force was far ahead of work he had seen done by other task forces over the years.