



Board of Trustees

Lyn Frankel, Chair
Carole Alexander
Jane Coffey
Ellen Dew
Christine Dietze
Karen Footner
Doug Herbert
Martin Knott
Susan Magsamen
Mary Ann Mears
Nicole Nesbitt
Brian Sullam
Veronica Thomas
Danita Beck Wickwire

Executive Director

Quanice Floyd

Development Director

Rachel McGrain

**Program and
Administrative
Coordinator**

Peter Dayton

**artlook@ Maryland
Coordinator**

Kate Lynch

November 12, 2019

Dr. William E. 'Brit' Kirwan
Chair, Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education
Blueprint for Maryland's Future Funding Formula Workgroup
House Office Building, Room 121
Annapolis, MD, 21401

To the Members of the Commission:

We at Arts Education in Maryland Schools fully support the Funding Formula established by this workgroup. AEMS believes that the arts are necessary to the growth of the whole child, and it is this concern for the whole child that we believe the Commission understands and acknowledges in their funding formula. Specifically the prioritization of increased funds for SPED and ELL students; for wraparound services for students in high concentrations of poverty; for school mental health services; and for teacher training in cultural competence and restorative practices, these recommendations and more will lead to dramatically better conditions for children whose present and future lives are being damaged and hindered by our status quo. Access to robust arts education is a vital component of giving Maryland's children a high-quality education, and the fine arts play a role in each of the areas prioritized in the Commission's funding formula.

The arts are an important tool in developing spatial reasoning, complex thinking, and self-expression, and provide special education students with pathways to learning that engage them kinesthetically and intellectually. Integrating the arts into other subjects is used to facilitate learning for ELL students as well, giving them multiple modalities through which to synthesize material. Art therapy is a highly successful method of treatment for traumatic stress disorders. Lastly, the arts are an especially important tool in empowering students from marginalized communities to shape their own narratives and to create cultural products that give them agency.

Only about 40% of Maryland's students are graduating high-school at the standard of College and Career Ready; the Commission's recommendations envision a system in which all students leave high-school having reached this standard, or having a plan that keeps them on track to be a productive citizen and contributor to the workforce. This is crucial not just for our students' development but to sustain Maryland's economic prosperity. For students to be college and career ready, they must have the skills and attributes required by businesses, employers, and

190 W. Ostend Street, Suite 210 Baltimore, Maryland 21230

410.837.5500 | www.aems-edu.org

[f@aemsalliance](#) [@artsedmaryland](#)

audiences. World Economic Forum includes complex problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, emotional intelligence, and cognitive flexibility in its top 10 skills sought-after by CEOs from 2020 to 2030, all skills cultivated in the arts. These are vital to a thoughtful and dynamic populace and are now explicitly desirable in the careers for which we hope to prepare Maryland students.

Now I want you to close your eyes and envision a classroom where there are no barriers to student learning, where students' needs are met, where schools are an integral part of their communities, led by highly-credentialed teachers, whose time and expertise are valued and rewarded. What are the students doing? What do their classrooms look like? What do their futures look like? We won't see that if we continue to make excuses for not delivering our children the better life and learning environment these recommendations spell out. On September 4th, 2018 Governor Hogan declared that "our children desperately need someone to fight for their civil rights," and AEMS has the highest confidence that the Commission convened under his watch is doing just that. To ignore or undermine this hard work is to be satisfied with inequality and to preside over the continued deterioration of our citizenry. We urge all involved in turning this Commission's work from recommendations into reality to act now and make this happen. Our kids can't wait.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Quanice Floyd', written over a circular scribble.

Quanice Floyd
Executive Director, Arts Education in Maryland Schools (AEMS)