

Boston Public Schools

Arts Education Policy (Revision)

May 2018

Introduction

The Arts are a vital element of a “well rounded” education, as described in the **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**¹, the 2015 law that governs the United States K–12 public education policy. Research shows the importance of arts education in increasing student achievement and engagement, student attendance, graduation rates, school culture, family and community engagement and preparing students with 21st century skills.

- Adolescent arts students achieve more positive developmental outcomes than their peers who do not pursue arts in school. By and large, students experience positive developmental benefits from their arts study, that extend beyond adolescence into adulthood. (Elpus, 2014)
- Arts instruction in schools has been shown to increase student self-confidence and develop social and emotional expression (Harland, et al., 2002).
- There are also links found between the arts and academic achievement, including high achievement in reading and mathematics on standardized tests, when arts is integrated into classroom instruction (Catterall & Waldorf, 2002).

As the birthplace of public education, Boston Public Schools (BPS) is committed to transforming the lives of its 56,000 students through exemplary teaching in a system of innovative and welcoming schools. The Arts – Dance, Music, Theater, Visual/Media Arts - play an essential role in providing students with this innovative, well-rounded education designed to meet the needs of each child and the belief that every student should have “equitable access to quality sequential arts education.”

Arts Education Policy History & Progress

In April 1994, the School Committee adopted the Arts Education Policy Recommendations that endorsed sequential training in Music, Visual Arts, Theater, Dance and Literary Arts as part of the core curriculum, including collaboration with Boston’s professional arts and cultural community, the establishment of site-based Arts’ Planning Teams, student enrichment and honors programs, festivals and exhibits to showcase student artwork, and professional development for arts teachers. The adoption of the 1994 policy increased arts education opportunities for some BPS students.

During implementation of the policy, BPS Standards in the Arts were developed and approved during the 1997-98 school year. The standards, developed in collaboration with arts teachers and members of the cultural and higher education community, were based upon the National

¹ Every Student Succeeds Act, S.1177, 114th Cong. (2015). Retrieved from http://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/every_student_succeeds_act_-_conference_report.pdf

Standards for the Arts, the Massachusetts Arts Frameworks and the principles of the BPS Arts Education Policy and served as the guide to ensure consistent quality of arts teaching.

In 2000, focus groups of teachers, arts agencies, colleges and institutions were convened to clarify policy intent, standards, and responsibility and ownership for Policy implementation. The School Committee also sponsored a successful public forum for arts education in Fall 2000. Recommendations from these gatherings were blended with the original Policy to create a revised Arts Policy, adopted by the School Committee on May 23, 2001 focused on providing Dance, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts for all BPS students.

Despite the accomplishments made with the adoption of the Arts Education Policy the landscape for quality arts education remained uneven in the schools. In 2009, under the leadership of Superintendent Carol Johnson and in collaboration with local philanthropic and community leaders, BPS launched a planning process to develop a coherent framework for District-wide expansion of arts education. Based on the results of the planning process the BPS Arts Expansion Initiative² was launched. This ongoing multi-year, public/private partnership, has dramatically changed the landscape for arts education in BPS. The arts expansion work is focused on three major goals:

- Expanding direct arts instruction for students during the school day;
- Building the capacity of the district's central office to support expanded arts education programs and curricula;
- Organizing stronger and more efficient partnerships among schools and community based arts and cultural groups to ensure that students received the highest quality arts instruction possible;

and, we have built our work for successful implementation of these goals using these core strategies:

- Engaging the broad range of stakeholders including higher education institutions, city government, cultural organizations, philanthropies, communities, and families.
- Using data-informed assessment that identifies gaps in access and equity
- Establishing measurable public commitments and policies, and tracking progress.
- Regular communications about our progress
- Investing in the people (e.g., families, youth, teachers, teaching artists) engaged in this work at the deepest level and connecting them with others (e.g., elected officials, philanthropists, school leadership) to help move the needle

² The Boston Foundation *The Arts Advantage: Expanding Arts Education in the Boston Public Schools* (January 2009)

BPS Arts Education Today

In 2017-18, with more than 17,000 additional students having access to in-school arts education than in 2009, the success of our arts education expansion has garnered recognized as a national model by other cities, policy makers and philanthropic leaders. Measures of success for the initiative include:

- Increase in number of students in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth receiving weekly, year-long arts instruction from 67 to 96 percent;
- The number of high school students receiving any arts instruction increased from 26 to 68 percent;
- 65 percent of pre-kindergarten through eighth grade students receive the twice-weekly, year-long arts instruction benchmark, moving towards best practice—up from approximately 10 percent in 2009.
- More than 160 additional full-time, certified arts teachers hired since 2009;
- Increase in the district budget for arts education from \$15M to more than \$30M annually;
- Expanded partnerships with more than 60 arts and cultural organizations who support arts education in schools; and
- Visible demand for arts education from families and students solidifying the support from the community and needed to protect arts education from budget cuts and leadership transitions.

The 2013 mayoral campaign provided the backdrop for a groundswell of discussion and advocacy for arts and culture in the City of Boston. Mayor Martin J. Walsh’s commitment to ensuring a thriving arts and culture community was manifested in the development of *“Boston Creates”*, the city’s first cultural plan in more than twenty years. Among the essential elements of a vibrant arts and culture landscape was the importance of providing quality arts education and arts-enhanced learning opportunities for all citizens.

*Boston Creates*³ has five key goals, which include a focus on access, equity, inclusion and diversity. Of particular note is Strategy 3 under Goal 4: *“Make Boston a place where arts education and arts-enhanced learning are available citywide through all stages of life”* which directly aligns with the goals of the BPS Arts Education Policy. The strategy includes tactics that support the articulation of the revised policy recommendations by stating that the city should revise and implement the current Boston Public Schools (BPS) Arts Education Policy to build and sustain BPS arts education, and promote collaborative arts education discussions for all Boston schools.

In 2016 under the direction of Dr. Tommy Chang, BPS Superintendent, the district developed a strategic five year plan whose guiding values are ensuring equity, coherence and innovation for all BPS students. The plan identifies five Focus Areas for implementation. Focus Area 1 is to ***Implement an inclusive, rigorous, and culturally/ linguistically sustaining PK-12 instructional***

³ City of Boston, “Boston Creates” Cultural Plan (June 2016), http://plan.bostoncreates.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/BostonCreates_ExecSummary_June2016_rspdf.pdf

program that serves the development of the whole child. The Arts are included as a key academic/instructional area: **1.7. Expand and deepen access to World Language and Visual and Performing Arts**, with identified goals and objectives that are aligned with the revised Arts education Policy.

This revised arts education policy provides BPS the opportunity to inform an important pillar of the city's cultural plan as well as an opportunity to reflect progress and next level of commitment to ensure sustained quality, sequential arts education for all K-12 students. Building off these successes, the revised policy will focus work on both continued building and sustaining the progress of the past nine years

2018 BPS Arts Education Revised Policy Goals and Recommendations

The Arts are an essential part of the core curriculum and the guiding principle for the revised policy is that every student will receive quality sequential arts education both in and out of school. Following are long-term goals, we expect continued progress towards these ultimate outcomes:

GOAL 1 – Comprehensive and sequential arts education for all students PreK-12th grade

Recommendations

- Ensure access to all arts disciplines--dance, music, theatre, visual and media arts— with all schools offering at least 2 disciplines;
- Support continued expansion of arts education, until all schools maintain **minimum** time-on-learning expectations in the Arts;
 - a. Elementary Schools - 90 minutes per week**
 - b. Middle Schools - 120 minutes per week**
 - c. High Schools - Every student will take one full year or two half year courses of the arts to meet the district's graduation requirement. One elective in at least three different disciplines should be offered each year at every high school.**
- Set minimum staffing requirements of certified arts teachers to improve teacher/student ratio; the ideal ratio for elementary and middle school is 250:1.
- District graduation requirement includes 2 credits of Arts electives

GOAL 2: Consistent and high quality District arts curriculum, instruction and assessment

Recommendations

- Ensure District curriculum, instruction, and assessment is consistent across all schools/grades and supports sequential arts pathways from preK-12th grade;
- BPS Arts Standards, curriculum map, common units and cornerstone assessments are aligned to the National Common Arts Standards, MassCore Literacy strands and align to BPS Essentials Guidance documents
- Quality arts integration curriculum implemented across the district.

- a. *Scheduled common planning time and professional development for arts and academic teams*
- b. *Develop and implement guidance documents for quality STEAM teaching and learning*

GOAL 3 – Strong District/Central Office Capacity

Recommendations

- Provide strategic support for administrators, teachers, partners and parents in developing and sustaining arts education programs;
- Provide quality, relevant professional development for teachers, administrators, partners;
- Provide common assessment tools that qualitatively and quantitatively measure and communicate learning outcomes in the arts;
- Maintain a sustainable system to track, analyze and disseminate standardized district-wide data on arts instruction and programming;
- Inclusion of the arts in the school progress/report cards with multiple indicators;
- Maintain and pursue system-wide and site-based partnerships;
- Continue to broaden parent and community support for arts and arts education.

GOAL 4 - Ensure adequate and sustainable arts education funding that is equitably distributed across the District

Recommendations

- All schools and Central Office should maintain a budget for arts instructional materials, resources, equipment, maintenance and repair;
- Support schools in prioritizing arts resource allocations, implementing the 2001 policy revision formula:
 - a. Site-based allocation for the replenishment of arts materials, supplies and transportation:
 - **Elementary - 14% of per pupil supply expenditure**
 - **Middle School – 15% of per pupil supply expenditure**
 - **High School – 16% of per pupil supply expenditure**
 - b. If more than one art form exists in a school, the minimum allocation should be divided among the arts teachers based on the number of students served by each respective teacher
 - c. District budget allocation will provide funding for adoption of textbooks, curriculum materials and other resources on rotating schedule for each discipline
- Develop and maintain external funding streams via previously untapped sources such as corporate giving and public donation.

District Commitment and Implementation Plan

1. The School Committee will ensure that access to quality sequential arts education for all BPS students continues to be a priority for the District and will not change with new administrations/leadership, and shifting priorities
2. The District and School Committee will ensure that adequate and sustainable arts education funding is equitably distributed across the District and additional funds are available to support arts innovation and school action plans
 - The Long Term Financial Plan, which aims to equitably distribute more discretionary funds to schools, will support the investments recommended in Goal 4
 - District leaders will continue to evaluate various budgeting methods, such as a percentage of the overall school budget or allocating an amount per pupil/per art form given the disparity in materials, supplies and equipment needed for various art forms each year to determine how to support continued growth of programs
3. The Superintendent, or his/her designee, and the Executive Director for the Arts will have the responsibility, authority, and accountability to lead, facilitate, and monitor the implementation of this Policy so that it is fully embedded in the operations and practices of the District.
4. Aligning with the implementation of the district's strategic plan, we have developed indicators for successful implementation of policy recommendations. Implementation of the policy will be managed at the District level by the Visual and Performing Arts Department in collaboration with schools, parents, partners and funders and benchmarks are included in the strategic implementation plan.
5. We will continue to administer our annual **Arts Survey**, which assesses progress towards meeting our goal of access to quality sequential arts education for all BPS students. Data from the survey, along with our **School Arts Index Report** are available for schools, families and the broader community on our **BPS website** and will be included in the **School Quality Framework** for assessing the quality of each school.

Summary

Implementing and sustaining these recommendations will require the continued, collective investment of the City, District leadership, school administrators, arts teachers, parents and the broader Boston community as active advocates and supporters in ensuring that all BPS students have access to excellent, diverse and consistent arts education in their schools. As we continue to prepare our students to be global citizens, college and career ready, eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps, quality arts education is essential to achieving these goals.

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