

Good day,

I am writing on behalf of the dance teachers in Vermont regarding the revisions to the Educational Quality Standards and arts education.

Please consider our voice in your work.

[EQS Revision Letter from VT Dance Teachers](#)

Sincerely,

Rebecca McGregor

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Vermont Board of Education

Oct 10, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

We are writing to express our strong support for the inclusion and emphasis of arts education within the Educational Quality Standards. We advocate for a well-rounded education and firmly believe that arts education is integral to the overall development and success of our students. In reading through the proposed revisions, **we feel strongly that the revised EQS will waterdown the value of arts education (particularly the performing arts).**

Arts education encompasses a wide spectrum of creative disciplines, including visual arts, music, theater, dance, and more. These disciplines not only foster creativity and self-expression but also offer numerous benefits that significantly enhance the quality of education and the lives of our students.

Here are some key points highlighting the value of arts education in the Educational Quality Standards:

Enhanced Critical Thinking: Engaging in arts education encourages students to think critically, analyze information, and make informed decisions. This skill is transferable to other subjects and real-life situations, enabling students to become better problem solvers.

Improved Academic Performance: Numerous studies have shown that students who participate in arts education tend to perform better in other academic subjects. The discipline and focus required for artistic pursuits can positively impact students' overall academic achievements.

Cultural Appreciation and Diversity: Arts education introduces students to various cultures, traditions, and perspectives. It fosters an understanding and appreciation of diversity, promoting tolerance and empathy among students.

Emotional Expression and Well-being: The arts provide a unique outlet for emotional expression, helping students manage stress, anxiety, and other emotions. This can contribute to improved mental health and overall well-being.

Creativity and Innovation: The arts inspire creativity, innovation, and the ability to think outside the box. These skills are increasingly valuable in today's rapidly changing world.

Preparation for the Workforce: Many industries, including technology and business, value employees with creative problem-solving skills and the ability to work collaboratively. Arts education prepares students for these demands in the workforce.

Community and Civic Engagement: Participation in the arts often involves collaboration, teamwork, and community involvement. It fosters a sense of civic engagement and social responsibility.

We feel strongly that the revised EQS will waterdown the value of arts education (particularly the performing arts).

As written in the revised EQS document, "Each school shall ensure students are able to access academic and experiential learning opportunities that reflect their emerging abilities, and aspirations, as outlined in the students' Personalized Learning Plans and aspirations, as outlined in the students' Personalized Learning Plans."

This particular revision expresses the need to include a vibrant, inclusive and core arts education experience for all students.

Tying "the arts" under global citizenship and having simply one mention of artistic expression does not address the intended goal of access to a well-rounded arts education. The arts should be a stand alone category under curriculum.

Another line in the EQS revision document that touches closest to the value of arts education is, "Each school shall provide appropriate socially and culturally responsive learning opportunities to all students to support their attainment of the standards approved by the State Board of Education and each public school shall provide support for students who require additional assistance to succeed or be challenged in the general education environment."

The arts offer unique and valuable opportunities for socially and culturally responsive learning.

Cultural Expression and Representation: The arts encompass a wide range of cultural forms, including music, dance, visual art, literature, and theater. These art forms often serve as powerful means of expressing cultural identity, values, and experiences. By engaging with culturally diverse artworks and creating their own, students can explore and celebrate different cultures, fostering an appreciation for cultural diversity.

Inclusive Curriculum: Arts education can be intentionally designed to include artworks and practices from various cultures, both historical and contemporary. This inclusivity ensures that students from diverse backgrounds see themselves represented in the curriculum, which can enhance their sense of belonging and identity within the educational environment.

Diverse Perspectives: Through exposure to art from different cultures, students gain access to diverse perspectives and worldviews. They can explore how artists from various backgrounds interpret and respond to social and cultural issues. This exposure encourages open-mindedness and empathy as students learn to appreciate different points of view.

Authentic Learning: The arts provide opportunities for authentic and experiential learning. Students can engage in activities such as traditional dance, music, or visual art techniques that have deep cultural significance. This hands-on approach allows students to connect with cultural traditions on a personal level, promoting a deeper understanding of cultural practices.

Socially Relevant Themes: Many artworks in the arts address socially relevant themes, such as identity, social justice, inequality, and human rights. By analyzing and creating art that addresses these themes, students can engage in meaningful discussions and critical thinking about societal issues, promoting social awareness and activism.

Community Engagement: Arts education often extends beyond the classroom through community partnerships, cultural events, and exhibitions. Students can collaborate with local artists and community members to create art projects that address community needs and issues, fostering a sense of social responsibility and community engagement.

Personal Connection: Artmaking allows students to draw from their own cultural backgrounds and personal experiences. They can incorporate elements of their own heritage, traditions, and stories into their creative work, making their learning experiences more personally meaningful.

Multimodal Learning: The arts engage students in multimodal learning, where they use different senses and forms of expression. This can be especially beneficial for learners with diverse learning styles and abilities, as it provides multiple entry points for understanding and communication.

Global Perspective: Arts education can broaden students' understanding of the interconnectedness of the world. By exploring art from around the globe, students learn about the ways in which cultures influence and inspire one another, leading to a more global perspective.

Promoting Equity: Culturally responsive arts education can help bridge educational equity gaps by valuing and affirming the cultural backgrounds and identities of all students. It creates a more inclusive and equitable learning environment where every student's voice is valued.

To develop a strongly supported well-rounded education that values all opportunities for student development, we propose the artistic expression portion be created into a similar category as PE.

For instance, arts education should be accessible to all students as a core curricular offering in at least 1 of the arts disciplines throughout PreK-12th grades (1 art class per week for all students PreK-8 and a minimum of 1 fine and/or performing art credit for all students grades 9-12). All students graduating from a VT high school should be required to obtain a minimum of 1 art credit from the fine/performing arts disciplines.

I kindly urge you to consider these points as you deliberate on the importance of arts education within the Vermont Educational Quality Standards. Our students deserve a well-rounded education that includes the arts as a core curricular experience, as it not only enriches their lives but also equips them with skills and perspectives necessary for success in the 21st century.

Sincerely,

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Nichole Lefaiivre-Damon, Dance Teacher Lamoille Union High School

Rebecca McGregor, Dance Teacher Lyndon Institute

Colleen McHugh, Dance Teacher BFA St. Albans