

ARTS *for* ALL INITIATIVE

An Initiative to Add Arts Education
to the Massachusetts State University
System Admission Requirements



■ The Squeezing Out of Arts Education

Due to education reform efforts of the past 20 years, including No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Massachusetts public schools have been required to shift focus primarily to the “tested” subjects of reading, math and science. This narrowed emphasis often pushes the arts to the sidelines. In a nationwide survey of visual art educators in 2010, “32% reported that enrollments in their art programs had decreased... students were denied access to art classes because they were required to take extra math or language arts courses or because they had failed to pass language arts or math tests required for the measurement of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).”

■ The NEED to Foster Innovation, Creativity, and 21st Century Skills

Arts education—dance, media arts, music, theatre/drama, visual arts—is a necessary component for the development of the “whole child,” enabling each individual to become a productive, creative and innovative member of society. Equal access to high quality, sequential arts education is essential to developing important 21st-century skills and will allow our Commonwealth to regain and maintain a competitive economic edge globally by exporting creative ideas and products.

■ **Arts education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is not equally accessible to all children.** While some districts have rich, sequential and regular arts learning in every grade, others have limited or no arts learning. This is the case despite the designation of the arts as a core academic subject in the 1993 Massachusetts Education Reform Act’s “Common Core of Learning”.

■ The ARTS for All Massachusetts Initiative

The ARTS for All Initiative calls for the development and implementation of a comprehensive statewide arts strategic plan establishing arts education as integral to every school district’s curriculum.

■ **As a first step, the ARTS For All Initiative will work with higher education to establish one year of arts education** in high school as an admission requirement to the Massachusetts state university including the UMASS systems. Current admission criteria include specific courses in English, Math, Science, Social Studies and Foreign Languages. Experience has shown in Massachusetts that adoption of these subject requirements ensure they are taught in every high school across the Commonwealth, resulting in a de facto mandated sequence of learning. Inclusion of the arts will help make certain all students in the Commonwealth have access to the arts regardless of geographic location, ethnicity, economic level, or any other demographic status or condition.

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education should follow the lead of ten other states and require incoming university students to take at least one year of visual or performing arts, music or dance in high school as an admission requirement to the state university system.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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