Covid-19 Policy Recommendations

On March 13, 2020 Governor Baker issued a statewide stay-at-home order requiring the closure of all nonessential businesses and schools. Closures for K-12 and higher education institutions have required schools and educators to pivot to remote learning. The structural weaknesses in our school systems have come into stark contrast because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Arts education has long been a space where young people develop emotional, social and cognitive skills that better support overall development. In this unprecedented moment, access to arts education is critical for all students, regardless of zip code.

Arts For All, a coalition of non-profit organizations and public agencies, has identified the following challenges and solutions:

**FUND EDUCATION**
State revenues are forecasted to significantly decline as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak. There is an increased need to ensure that state funding for Chapter 70 and the recently passed Student Opportunity Act (SOA) remains intact, and that funds are allocated at the local level to include arts education.

**Solutions**
- Preserve state funding for education in the annual budget process.
- Advocate to local school leaders to allocate funds for arts education efforts.

**CONNECT ORGANIZATIONS WITH SCHOOLS**
Arts and cultural organizations closed facilities and cancelled in-person programming because of public health concerns. Programs including in- and out-of-school arts education were included in these cancellations.

**Solutions**
- Schools are urged to fulfill existing agreements with teaching artists and cultural organizations using virtual meeting technology.
- Encourage schools to access learning opportunities offered by Massachusetts cultural organizations to support distance learning.
- Disseminate a statewide repository and directory of arts education resources by cultural and arts organizations that teachers and parents can access.

**ACCESS & TRAINING FOR TEACHING THE ARTS REMOTELY**
Schools have converted to online and other distance learning for students. The inequities in access to equipment and internet connectivity will increase the achievement gap for students.
Most teachers are inexperienced in distance-learning procedures, use of technology, technological choices, other resources, and distance-learning protocols. Finally, some schools are not prioritizing arts education classes in virtual learning for students or developing appropriate innovative solutions for maintaining quality arts education.

Solutions
- Use free-and-reduced lunch student identifications and rural regions without high-speed internet to prioritize distribution of equipment and access to high speed internet. This will help ensure that all students have equitable access to appropriate technology and WiFi.
- Develop a series of professional development resources sponsored by DESE to develop online-teaching techniques for arts education.
- Advocate to school districts to include arts education classes in students’ virtual learning.
- Require districts to formulate a comprehensive emergency-distance learning plan that includes arts education.

SUPPORT THE NEXT GENERATION OF ARTS TEACHERS
Higher Education teacher education programs and practicums have been severely disrupted by the Covid-19 outbreak and quarantine.

Solutions
- DESE and higher education partners should develop alternative ways of meeting practicum hours wherever possible.
- Create a temporary licensure program for graduating college education majors who are unable to complete practicum hours, and have them complete their practicum on the job in the fall under university supervision, leading to full initial licensure.
- DESE should develop different kind(s) of additional licensure for distance learning including for arts education, which requires vastly different skill sets from regular in-classroom teaching.

Arts for All, is a coalition of non-profit organizations and public agencies. Together we work in collaboration to ensure all students have equitable access to and active participation in a robust arts education through the entire public education spectrum.