



Massachusetts State University System and the University of Massachusetts  
**Arts Education Admission Requirement Proposal**



The Department of Higher Education is requested to consider one year of visual, media, or performing arts (dance, music, theatre) be required as an admission requirement for the Massachusetts State University and University of Massachusetts systems.

This document provides a detailed rationale for the importance of this step to improve high school education which in turn will assist student preparation for a successful college career. The attached appendices provide significant supporting research and data.

### ***Executive Summary***

The arts are necessary for the full development of the whole student. The arts (dance, media arts, music, theatre, visual arts) are listed as core academic subjects both by federal and state law. While Massachusetts secondary school curriculum standards call for the inclusion of the arts in a balanced course of study, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not have an accountability mechanism in place to ensure students have access to taking arts courses. The MassCore recommended high school curricula includes one credit of arts education, yet the arts course is the only subject area that is not required for entrance in the Massachusetts state university system. Thus, there is not a strong regulatory incentive in place to encourage districts to provide arts courses for all students to take this important discipline in high schools across the Commonwealth.

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education admission requirements in all other MassCore subjects provide that accountability mechanism, supplying a structure to ensure students are taking necessary and rigorous courses in most disciplines. This request is to utilize the DHE admission requirements as a leverage to increase the access for all students to take arts courses in high schools. By adding this requirement, Massachusetts will join ten other states which have a similar requirement. The data and anecdotal evidence from these states show support for and successful implementation of this requirement, with no detrimental impact reported.

The arts assist students to become college and career ready through a variety of mechanisms, including developing creativity and innovation, out-of-the-box thinking skills, collaboration, perseverance, focus, multiple ways of approaching and solving problems, and leadership. Massachusetts students who complete the MassCore sequence (including the arts) have a significantly higher rate of attending college. A survey of arts programs across Massachusetts high schools shows that most districts have the capacity to provide arts education to our students. By including arts education as a college entrance requirement, the proper incentives will be put in place to ensure all students have equitable access to taking arts classes, and that they have the tools and knowledge necessary for success in college and the professional workplace.



## Arts For All: Powerful Ingredient for Successful Students

“The arts can help students become tenacious, team-oriented problem-solvers who are confident and able to think creatively.”

—Arne Duncan, US Secretary of Education <sup>1</sup>

“The arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution. This, too, is at odds with the use in our schools of multiple choice tests in which there are no multiple correct answers. The tacit lesson is that there is almost always, a single correct answer. It is seldom that way in life.”

—Elliot W. Eisner, Stanford University <sup>2</sup>

“The arts should be supported not only because research supports their value, but also because they are as dynamic and broad-based as more widely accepted disciplines. They contribute to the development and enhancement of multiple neurobiological systems, including cognition, emotional, immune, circulatory, and perceptual motor systems. Ultimately, the arts can help make us better people.”

—Eric Jensen, Teacher, Scholar, and Member of the Society for Neuroscience and NY Academy of Science <sup>3</sup>

Arts education—dance, media arts, music, theatre/drama, visual arts—is a necessary component for the development of the “whole student,” enabling each individual to become a productive, creative, and innovative member of society. Literacy in one or more of the arts expands the ability to communicate and understand the world around us. The artistic process fosters analytical thinking, problem solving, and innovation. Students engaged in sequential arts education are often more engaged in school, have better attendance, and achieve at a higher level across most subjects.<sup>4</sup> Equal access to high quality, sequential arts education is essential to developing important 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills and will allow our Commonwealth to regain and maintain a competitive economic edge globally by exporting creative ideas and products. In short, the arts are essential to a balanced education by every student.

The global economy is shifting to an economy of ideas and innovation. Today, America faces what *Newsweek* has dubbed “the Creativity Crisis.”<sup>5</sup> According to a coalition of researchers,<sup>6</sup> 81 percent of American corporate leaders say that “creativity is an essential skill for the 21<sup>st</sup> century work force,” adding further that it is the skill most lacking in those entering the work force out of college. IBM conducted face-to-face interviews<sup>7</sup> with 1500 CEOs across 60 nations and 33 industries, and 60 percent named creativity as the most important leadership skill.

As Sandra Ruppert, Director of the Arts Education Partnership<sup>8</sup> notes: “The arts—both as a stand-alone subject and integrated into the curriculum—must be an integral part of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century education if our students are to

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-secretary-education-arne-duncan-reinforces-importance-arts-schools>

<sup>2</sup> Commentary from the Los Angeles Times, <http://articles.latimes.com/2005/jan/03/opinion/oe-eisner3>, January 3, 2005

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.miarted.org/sitepage.asp?page=advocacyquotes#sthash.IJmLoT80.dpuf>

<sup>4</sup> Catterall, James S. *Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art*, Los Angeles/London: Imagination Group/I-Group books, 2009

<sup>5</sup> *Newsweek*. July 10, 2010

<sup>6</sup> “Are They Really Ready to Work?” a study by the Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills and the Society for Human Resource Management.

<sup>7</sup> Please see: <http://public.dhe.ibm.com/common/ssi/ecm/en/gbe03297usen/GBE03297USEN.PDF>.

<sup>8</sup> AEP was established in 1995 through a unique inter-agency agreement between the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education, along with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA). See <http://www.aep-arts.org/>.

succeed in a global economy. Arts learning experiences play a vital role in the development and application of the imagination. They teach persistence and can serve as a primary source of student motivation. These capacities and habits of mind are among the essential ingredients needed for creativity and innovation. Everyone, not just the elite, must cultivate what Daniel Pink in his 2006 book, *A Whole New Mind*, calls an ‘artistic sensitivity.’<sup>9</sup>

Currently 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, other districts 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”<sup>10</sup> and “No child Left Behind”<sup>11</sup> on the federal level. Much of this disparity comes from urban and rural districts—the very districts with significant populations of students who come from poverty, or have significant special needs, or have large populations of English language learners. These are the students who often are in significant need of the improved academic, social, emotional, cognitive, aesthetic, and psychological outcomes the arts provide.

*“81 percent of American corporate leaders say that creativity is an essential skill for the 21st century work force”*

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 has pushed the arts and humanities to the sidelines or out of day-to-day education in some districts. 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).”<sup>12</sup> This contraction of the curriculum contradicts numerous research studies, all of which indicate that children in arts-poor schools often show a larger academic achievement gap compared with children in arts-rich districts.

Again quoting Sandra Ruppert, “We, as a nation, must work together to ensure that all students—not just some students—are able to reap the full academic and social benefits of learning in and through the arts. We must continue to call for and support federal, state and local education-reform efforts that demonstrate, in both policy and practice, that the arts are an indispensable and integral part of providing all students with a competitive education. Without such inclusion of the arts, even our best-intentioned efforts will be simply incomplete.”<sup>13</sup>

Experience has shown in Massachusetts that adoption of specific subject admission requirements to our state universities has had a strong influence in ensuring the subjects are taught in every high school across the Commonwealth—both public and private—resulting in a de facto mandated sequence of learning. Inclusion of the arts as a university entrance requirement will help ensure all high school students in the Commonwealth have access to the arts regardless of geographic location, ethnicity, economic level, or any other demographic status or condition. This is not a new idea, for across the United States, ten other state university systems plus the District of Columbia require incoming students to have taken fine or performing arts in high school as an admission requirement.

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<sup>9</sup> Ruppert, Sandra. *Creativity, Innovation and Arts Learning—Preparing All Students for Success in a Global Economy*. Arts Education Partnership, 2010, p. 2

<sup>10</sup> Please see <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edreform/commoncore/full.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Title IX, Part A, Section 9101 (1)(D)(11), Definitions: CORE ACADEMIC SUBJECTS—The term ‘core academic subjects’ means English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography. (Page 7 [http://www.artsusa.org/pdf/no\\_subject\\_left\\_behind.pdf](http://www.artsusa.org/pdf/no_subject_left_behind.pdf))

<sup>12</sup> National Art Education Foundation funded study of the Impact of No Child Left Behind on Art Education, Feb. 2012

<sup>13</sup> Ruppert, Op. Cit. p. 3

## The Role of Arts Education in the Overall Curriculum

Recognizing the importance of arts in high school curricula, the 1993 Education Reform Act in Massachusetts defined the arts as core-curricular subject areas (MA General Laws, Chapter 71). Additionally, the arts are also defined by federal guidelines under the *No Child Left Behind* legislation as being in the core curriculum. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education has approved the following areas of arts education specialization for educator licensure: dance, music, theatre, and visual arts.

The current Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework specifies separate learning standards in the each of the following domains of arts study: dance, music, theatre, and visual arts. The National Coalition for Core Arts Standards is currently in the final stages of developing new national arts standards, to be released in June, 2014. This will add a new fifth domain of arts education: Media Arts.<sup>14</sup> Thus media arts have been included in this discussion as they are likely to be added as a fifth domain in expected revised MA Arts Curriculum Frameworks.

Both Music and Visual Arts have advanced placement courses on the high school level (Music Theory, Art History, Studio Art 2D, and Studio Arts 3D)<sup>15</sup>. The College Board is also studying the possibility of adding AP courses and exams in Theatre and Dance in the future. The International Baccalaureate offers programs in all four main arts disciplines of dance, music, theatre, and visual arts plus the fifth area of film.<sup>16</sup> All of these facts support the inclusion of the arts as part of a comprehensive, well-rounded secondary education.

**MassCore Alignment:**<sup>17</sup> The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's (BESE) recommended high school course of study (MassCore) calls for at least one year of the arts on the secondary level. In designing MassCore, policy makers clearly understood the importance of the arts in a balanced high school education.

Subjects	MassCore Standards	BHE Admissions Standards
<b>English</b>	4 years	4 years
<b>Math</b>	4 years	4 years ( <i>eff. Fall '16</i> )
<b>Science</b>	3 years lab-based science <i>science and tech/engineering</i>	3 years lab-based science <i>science and tech/engineering</i> ( <i>eff. Fall '17</i> )
<b>History/ Social Science</b>	3 years	2 years, <i>including 1 course in U.S. History</i>
<b>Foreign Language</b>	2 years <i>of the same language</i>	2 years <i>of the same language</i>
<b>The Arts</b>	<b>1 year</b>	<b>none</b>
<b>Other</b>	5 additional "core" courses <i>in business education, career and technical education, health, technology</i> Additional learning opportunities, <i>e.g., AP, dual enrollment, online, work-based learning, senior project</i>	2 electives <i>from the above subjects or from the Arts &amp; Humanities or Computer Sciences</i>

<sup>14</sup> See <http://nccas.wikispaces.com/>

<sup>15</sup> See [http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/courses/teachers\\_corner/index.html](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/courses/teachers_corner/index.html)

<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.ibo.org/diploma/curriculum/group6/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.slideshare.net/massdhe/science-standards-alignment>, chart is adapted from slide #4

However, the current Board of Higher Education (BHE) admissions policies for four-year public universities and the University of Massachusetts have no general admission criteria in the area of the arts (dance, media arts, music, theatre, visual arts). Thus there is a lack of alignment in this important subject area between MassCore and BHE admission requirements. As MassCore is just a recommendation, there is nothing holding high schools accountable for meeting the arts standard. Unfortunately there is still a misconception by some school districts that the arts are “nice” to have, but not *necessary* to have. We need to change this misconception by adopting a high school arts requirement for admission in the Massachusetts state university systems.

Over the past three years, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education adopted changes in both math (2011) and science (2012) requirements that are being phased in over time so that university admission criteria in those subject areas will eventually be in complete alignment with MassCore.<sup>18</sup>

At present, the arts course of study is the only subject area currently listed under MassCore which is not aligned with the state university admission criteria.

### 2012 DHE Survey Results <sup>19</sup>

In March 2012, DHE distributed a survey on the proposed science recommendations from Massachusetts K-12 and higher education. Over 600 responses were received—20% from higher education and 80% from K-12. One general question that was asked is relevant to arts education as a listed MassCore subject area. Survey takers were questioned if “better alignment between college admissions requirements and the state’s K-12 recommended college preparatory course of study (MassCore) will send clearer signals to students about the courses they need in high school to get ready for college.” The following percentages of responders stated that they agreed or strongly agreed:

K-12		Higher Education	
All responders	94.6%	All responders	95.1%
Superintendents and principals	91.7%	Chief academic officers and other administrators	95.8%
Guidance counselors and faculty	95.3%	Faculty	96.2%

These results indicate that significant portions of both higher education and K-12 educators and administrators agree there should be a stronger alignment between MassCore and state university admission criteria. By aligning the two a strong system of consistency and accountability are in place.

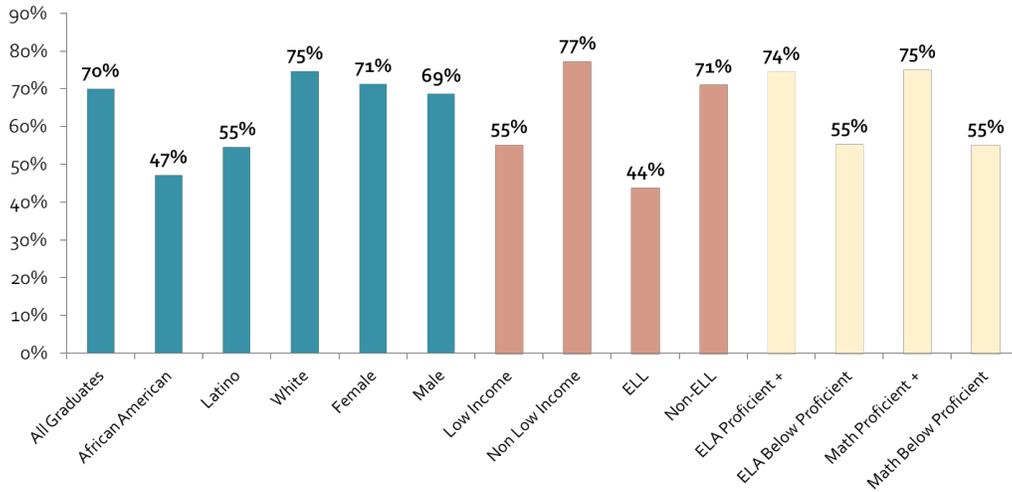
**College Readiness and MassCore:** The College Participation Advisory Group, which is a joint committee between both the DHE and the ESE, issued a report in April, 2013 entitled “Overview: College Readiness Reports and Trends”<sup>20</sup> which compared extensive amounts of data from 2005 to more recent data from 2010 regarding college readiness and enrollment in Massachusetts. The CPAG reported that approximately 70% of students by 2010 were completing the MassCore high school sequence (which includes one year of arts). There is a significant smaller percentage, however, for students of color, low-income students, and ELL students, who have completed MassCore.

<sup>18</sup> AAC 12-49 Science Admissions Motion to Board of Higher Education, June, 2012

<sup>19</sup> Please see Appendix A, page 11; from the AAC 12-49 Science Admissions Motion to BHE, June, 2012, p. 4

<sup>20</sup> Received by Jonathan Rappaport attending the CPAG meeting in April, 2012, at the DHE, Boston. The two charts on pages 3-4 are directly from this report.

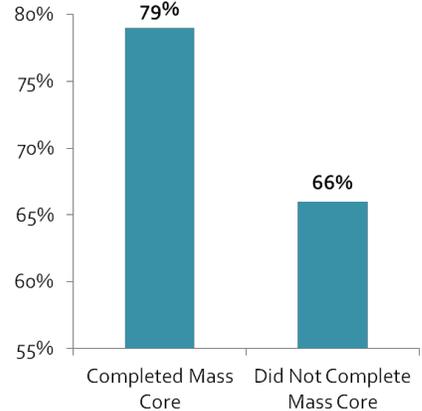
2010 High School Graduates Mass Core Completion Rate



Additionally, data indicates that a significantly higher percentage of high school students who have completed MassCore enroll in college within 16 months of graduation from high school.

This data supports the notion that completion of the MassCore curriculum significantly helps students become college and career ready. The one year of arts education is included in MassCore, but not in state university admission criteria. By adding the arts into the state university admission criteria, it will incentivize primarily urban and rural districts to increase course offerings in the arts to help their students reach both MassCore and university admission requirements.

Percent of 2010 High School Graduating Class Enrolling in College within 16 Months of Graduation



**Experience in Other States Implementing an Arts Admissions Requirement to State Universities**

Ten other states currently require or are in the process of phasing in a one-year arts-admission requirement to their state university systems. These are Arizona, California, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Louisiana, Missouri, South Carolina, Tennessee, Washington (state), and West Virginia. Ohio has a half-year arts-course requirement.

Arts|Learning and MASSCreative researched and analyzed the experiences in these other states by speaking with state arts education officials and to research data regarding the impact of this requirement (if any) on low-income students or students of color.

**Anecdotal Evidence from Other States:**

Anecdotal evidence was collected from various state officials about the positive impact that this requirement has had in education in their states. Here are a few comments that were gathered from chief arts-education officers<sup>21</sup> of the various states' departments of education over the past year:

<sup>21</sup> Telephone interviews conducted during the 2012-13 school year. The comments in quotes were written down as officials spoke, and may contain some paraphrasing.

**California:** The arts requirement “brought a whole new conversation to the table about what was learned in a full year of one arts discipline and fed to the UC/CSU-felt need that students needed more than the learning of the science/math/language scope of learning. This has not affected which populations enrolled in the UC/CSU system....in fact it supported... It was the low math/ELA (achievement) that kept students from applying to four-year schools. Many students entered our strong community college system, fleshing out beginning work there, and with the visual and performing arts year on their transcripts, then more easily matriculated to the four-year system from the community colleges.”

“**Louisiana** has two high school diploma tracks. The ‘college’ track requires 1 unit of arts that can be met by dance, media, music, theatre, or fine arts survey. An ‘Industry-Based Certification’ course can also be used to meet the arts requirement if it is in the student’s career concentration.”

“**Missouri** state universities have an entrance requirement equal to the high school graduation requirement of one fine arts credit. This is one reason we have not lost the high school fine arts requirement... I have asked around and so far I do not know the history of how the requirement was established. One teacher told me that the requirement was in place when she started teaching high school music in 1974.” The impact of the Missouri program is noteworthy that it appears widespread beyond public education: “Even private and parochial high schools maintain fine-arts programs in their high schools in order to be ‘college prep.’”

### **Impact on Students of Color**

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, which is from the *National Center for Education Statistics* (NCES). IPEDS does collect data by race/ethnicity (through self identification by students), but not by economic status.<sup>22</sup>

Through contacting education personnel in each state, the year that the admission credit requirement was adopted or implemented was determined in six of the above states and the District of Columbia. Once this was established, IPEDS admissions data of each state high education institution was collected in three distinct years wherever possible:

1. one or two years prior to implementation in that state or jurisdiction
2. the year of implementation
3. one or two years following implementation.

This spread of years made it possible to track any possible trends regarding the numbers and percentages of students of color in state university admissions data. It should be clearly stated that this data does not take into consideration any other possible contributing factors that might affect admissions of these subgroups, such as increased/decreased affirmative action policies, other changes in admissions requirements, or changes in economic conditions (such as cost of state tuitions or availability of student aid, etc.), to mention just a few.

**Results of the Data:** In six of the seven states surveyed<sup>23</sup>, there has been a slight *increase* of most categories of students of color from before implementation to after implementation of a fine-arts admission requirement in these

<sup>22</sup> Please see Appendix B, starting on page 12 for details of this data

<sup>23</sup> In two states, the state officials were unable to determine the exact year the admission policy was adopted or implemented. Additionally, as Connecticut will not have their arts admission requirement implemented until July, 2015, that state was not included in the study. The seven states included, with date(s) the policy was implemented, are AZ (1989), CA (2001-2004), DC (2007), LA (2010; “soft” implementation), MN (1993), TN (2006-2010), and WV (2007).

states. From this data it appears that the adoption of this requirement has not discouraged students of color from applying and becoming accepted into their state universities and colleges.

Since adoption of the fine-arts credit requirement in the District of Columbia, there has been a significant drop of numbers of students who have volunteered to self-identify themselves by race or ethnicity. In 2005, 4,860 students (out of 5,169) or 94% were identified by race or ethnicity. By 2010, 3,074 (out of 5,311) or 57.87% of students were identified by race or ethnicity. Thus no conclusions are possible in DC regarding the impact of the Fine Arts credit requirement on students of color as there is such a discrepancy of students reporting ethnicity.

### ***Status of Arts Education in Massachusetts High Schools:***

Massachusetts secondary schools have the infrastructure in place to support many, if not most, students to be able to meet an admission requirement of one year of arts education prior to admission to the MA state universities and UMass systems. This is further evidence that reinforces the DHE's own 2010 statistics that approximately 70% of the Commonwealth's students were already completing the MassCore sequence.

*“48.6% of grade 9-12 students are already meeting the arts education requirement of MassCore*

According to MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education data, there are 378 public district, vocational, and charter secondary schools in the Commonwealth. The vast majority of these schools (333) have comprehensive arts education offerings.<sup>24</sup>

Of the remaining 45 schools that do not have course offerings in the arts, most of them (26) are vocational high schools (which are exempt from some of the MassCore requirements), 16 are either specialty or alternative high schools, and 3 are regular high schools (2 in Boston, 1 in Springfield).

Findings from this data show the following (excluding technology courses in media arts):

- The average number of arts classes per high school is 34.37 classes per school
- The total student enrollment in 2012-13 arts classes was 139,460 students. 287,055 grade 9-12 students were enrolled in 2012-13, meaning 48.6% of 9-12 students are already meeting the arts education requirement of MassCore (At the time of writing this document, October 1, 2013 data was not yet available).
- If the media arts technology courses were added into these statistics, well over 50% of students would be meeting the MassCore arts requirement.

The MA ESE also maintains a comprehensive “menu” of all possible courses and course descriptions in each subject area that are available in one or more schools across the Commonwealth. Naturally, not every high school offers all of these courses. For the arts, possible course offerings in high schools include 7 in Dance (e.g., dance technique, choreography, expressive movement, etc.) 12 in Drama and Theatre (e.g. acting, directing, playwriting, history and literature of the theatre, drama independent study), 23 in Music (e.g. band, chorus, music theory, orchestra, music history and appreciation, music composition, individual instrumental or vocal study), 28 in Visual Arts (e.g. art history, art appreciation, drawing, sculpture, pottery, graphics/printmaking, graphic design, textiles, advertising design, photography, computer art), and 5 in integrated arts.<sup>25</sup>

There are also more than 40 other courses offered in media arts (such as telecommunications, web design, computer graphics, interactive media, audiovisual production, photography, video, journalism, photojournalism,

<sup>24</sup> Please see Appendix E beginning on page 26 for detailed information

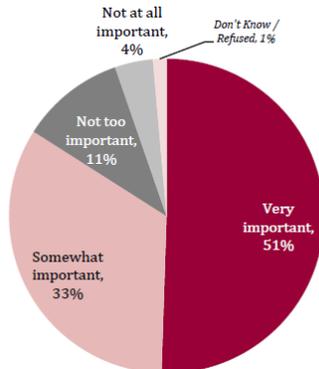
<sup>25</sup> Please see Appendix C, beginning on page 16

digital media technology and design, commercial graphic design, etc.) that may be listed under technology or other subject-area categories that could fulfill this requirement. Many of these types of courses are offered in our Vocational and Technical high schools that don't often have more traditional forms of the arts.<sup>26</sup>

There should also be alternative methods allowed for achieving this requirement. For example, some urban districts (notably the Boston Public Schools—which has its own fine-arts graduation requirement yet to be achieved) are developing partnering opportunities with various community arts organizations to allow students to work, study, and participate through out-of-school arts experiences as one way of achieving this requirement. Other options might be an independent study project to fulfill the requirement, or dual enrollment in a local community or four-year college to take an arts course.

### Boston Public Schools Arts Survey, January, 2014

Figure 1: Arts matter to parents in choosing a school  
% who said arts important in school selection



To better understand public school parents' opinion on the role of the arts in public schools, EdVestors sponsored a survey of public school parents in the city of Boston. The survey was conducted for EdVestors by The MassINC Polling Group, and was released on January 23, 2014. The survey of 497 public school parents in Boston was conducted to better understand their opinions of the role of arts programming in public schools and has a margin of error of 4.4 percent.<sup>27</sup>

“The poll found strong support for arts education among parents in Boston Public Schools. BPS parents believe arts education keeps their children engaged in school and helps improve academic performance. In addition, schools that offer the arts are viewed as more desirable by parents, many of whom are currently making school choices under a new assignment plan for the Boston Public Schools.”<sup>28</sup>

“The survey's detailed findings include that the majority of parents in Boston believe students who participate in the arts do better academically (62 percent) and are happier at school (70 percent) compared to students who do not participate in the arts. Perhaps for this reason, parents value the arts when evaluating the overall quality of a school. Sixty percent said that the arts are a ‘very important’ component of a good school. For one in five students, school is their only source of arts programming. Almost all parents report that their child participated in at least one form of art at school, compared to 77 percent participating outside of school.”<sup>29</sup>

*“BPS parents believe arts education keeps their children engaged in school and helps improve academic performance.”*

This survey clearly shows that urban parents recognize the importance of arts education in offering a balanced education to students, and that there is support for increasing arts education opportunities to the students in Boston, which traditionally had among the weakest arts education programs in Massachusetts. Adding an arts admission requirement to the Commonwealth's state university and UMass systems will help further this goal.

<sup>26</sup> please see Appendix D, beginning on page 22

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.edvestors.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Report-2013-10-Edvestors-BOS-parents.pdf>. The “Figure 1” chart is directly from this study.

<sup>28</sup> EdVestors e-newsletter from Laura Perille, January 23, 2014

<sup>29</sup> EdVestors e-newsletter from Laura Perille, January 23, 2014

## ***Arts|Learning and MASSCreative Recommendation***

The MA Board of Higher Education, as in most colleges and universities across the United States, has depended upon admission standards for articulating those benchmarks applicants need to meet for college-level work. Because of local community control in K-12 educational policy, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education cannot mandate course requirements for local high schools. BHE admissions policy, therefore, is the only realistic way for educational policymakers to mandate rigorous course-taking by high school students planning to attend college.<sup>30</sup>

Arts|Learning and MASSCreative recommend that the Department of Higher Education request adoption by the Board of Higher Education one year of high school performing, media, or visual arts for admissions purposes, to be implemented in fall, 2018. This phase-in is consistent with the recommended timeframe for the science lab requirement and the mathematics admissions requirement and would allow districts time to address any need for additional resources to meet this requirement. The proposed arts standard is in alignment with the current MassCore curriculum. It is also recommended that technology courses that may apply as media arts may fulfill this requirement as long as the school recognizes that coursework under the area of arts education. It is also recommended that alternative ways of obtaining the arts credit be considered by each high school (e.g., dual enrollment, virtual high school, online courses, alternative outside resources, and independent study).

BHE's admissions standards should continue to offer the flexibility for admission of up to ten percent of new students who may not meet the core course distribution requirement.<sup>31</sup>

This recommendation will help bring the MassCore arts requirement and the BHE admissions standards into full alignment, help bolster the importance of a balanced secondary education that includes the arts, and help prepare student readiness for college and the workplace through the development of creativity, focus, analytical skills, out-of-the-box thinking, perseverance, leadership, and cooperative learning. It is time that the Arts are viewed on an equal footing as other academic disciplines and receive the same priority and emphasis. Let's restore order and consistency by adding in the arts to the admission requirements of the Massachusetts State University and the UMass higher education systems.

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<sup>30</sup> AAC 12-49 Science Admissions Motion to Board of Higher Education, June, 2012, page 5

<sup>31</sup> AAC 12-49 Science Admissions Motion to Board of Higher Education, June, 2012, page 6