



January 8, 2015

New York State Board of Regents
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Avenue
Board of Regents, Room 110 EB
Albany, New York 1223

To Chancellor Merryl H. Tisch and the New York State Board of Regents:

On behalf of the New York State PTA members, I am providing commentary on the NYSED proposal for NYS Board of Regents adoption of the National Core Arts Standards.

At the request of Leslie Yolen, Associate in Visual Arts Education, Curriculum and Instruction Team, New York State Education Department, our PTA team reviewed the National Core Arts Standards website <http://www.nationalartsstandards.org/>, examining both the standards and the grade level/art form matrices. This commentary is based on feedback from NYS PTA board representatives Jane Harsha, VP; Catherine M. Romano, Education Coordinator; Sarah Henris, Reflections Specialist; Diane DeJoseph, Arts Specialist; and Maria DeWald, Past President and BOCES Arts Coordinator.

The New York State PTA supports the adoption of the learning standards with some reservations about the grade level matrices and implementation of the standards. These concerns are outlined below.

1. The Arts disciplines matrices on the National Core Arts Standards website emphasize knowledge, skills, and activities that are beyond the interest or capacity of many students who want mainly to produce or perform for personal satisfaction or enrichment. The emphasis on process and technical mastery in all the matrices will be a major shift for parents and students who enjoy "making or playing" but may not wish to pursue technical aspects beyond that level. Research demonstrates that it is the act of participating in the arts, not necessarily mastery of an art, that provides the greatest benefits to the individual and society from arts education.

Additionally, younger students should be engaged early and often in an arts education rich in opportunities for enjoyment, growth, and appreciation. This early exposure to creating or performing is essential to building the pool of students who will continue to study and practice the Arts in high school and beyond.

Balancing the interest of such students and their families with the emphasis on process over performance is a challenge that we feel should be explicitly addressed before the state implements these standards.

2. Parents who reviewed this material reported that while they understood the anchor standards, the language used within the individual grids/matrices was confusing to them. Considerable proactive work is needed to explain the fundamental shift this matrix poses, as well as to adapt the matrix into simpler language that will clearly show the connection among the standards

elements within an arts project or experience and across other learning disciplines like ELA and math. Parents and community members may not have the expertise to do so intuitively when reading this material. We feel the material might also prove challenging for teaching staff who are not experts in the specific Arts discipline and is therefore in need of revision.

3. Additional implementation questions:

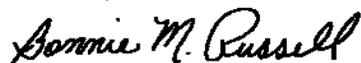
- a) Are schools expected to implement all the areas of Arts -- dance, media arts, visual art, theatre and music -- or will the Arts disciplines offered by each school be voluntary? How do we balance equity in access across schools and districts across our state? While schools are currently required to provide mandated hours of Arts instruction, in our experience this is not done in all schools, and Arts education is often the first program reduced or cut entirely when a school budget is stressed or distressed.
- b) If schools *must* implement the standards for all Arts areas, how will this be funded, especially in a tax cap environment with limited and unpredictable state funding? What portion of the school schedule will need to be allotted for Arts education? How will this balance with other mandated standards, especially those emphasized and assessed as part of APPR?
- c) How will schools who cannot fund or recruit Arts teaching staff and Arts-trained supervisors implement these standards, especially those schools with limited resources?
- d) How will teachers who may not be certificated in Arts understand and implement this complicated matrix of standards? This is especially important for elementary school educators who frequently substitute for Arts staff in schools with lesser resources.

We realize that we have provided questions and thoughts which did not fit into the format of the NYSED survey provided at <http://www.nysaae.org/ncas-survey/> for your consideration.

NYS PTA representatives have assisted NYSED in policy and standards adoption in the past. Based on our mutual experience with the Common Core Standards, we offer our services to assist NYSED in adapting the standards and by creating parent-friendly communication vehicles.

Please feel free to contact me at president@nyspta.org.

Sincerely,



Bonnie Russell, President
New York State PTA

cc:

Deputy Commissioner Ken Wagner, CI&IT, NYSED

Leslie Yolen, Associate in Visual Arts Education, Curriculum and Instruction Team, NYSED