

Lisa Cataldi

From: Shannon Davis <shannon.davis@cumberlandschools.org>
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2024 1:09 PM
To: House Education Committee

Good afternoon,

My name is Shannan Davis. I live in Warren, RI and work as a music teacher in Cumberland. I am also the Advocacy Co-Chair for RI Music Educator's Association. I am writing to ask you to approve moving H-7020, The Transparency in Arts Education and Access Proficiency Act to the full house and recommend its passage. We ask this because the students of RI need this bill to raise the status of Arts Education to its rightful place as a major curricular academic subject. We want to ensure districts are truly working towards following the Arts Proficiency mandates of the BEP and recently updated HS Graduation requirements.

Over the past few years, we are beginning to see more and more challenges that are beginning to unintentionally undermine some of the progress we've made, and exacerbate the inequities that continue to exist from district to district. These challenges include:

- a. The expansion of CTE programs in many high schools while maintaining existing traditional schedules, making it almost impossible for some CTE students to fit the Arts courses they have passion for and need to become proficient.
- b. The continued lack of significant, if any, arts courses at many vocational schools in our state.
- c. The expanded credit requirements for all students in Math, World Language, and other traditional academics in the updated graduation regulations. Any high school that implements these without substantially adjusting their traditional scheduling methods makes it challenging if not impossible for many students to fit in the arts courses they require and desire and are in fact required by the Basic Education Plan arts requirements.

As budgets in local districts get tighter with the elimination of post-COVID relief funding, there will once again be a likelihood that the Arts will be targeted for unfair reductions. If we have Arts proficiency mandates for all students, we can maintain access and improve equity.

5. The recent addition of an Arts Curriculum Coordinator at RIDE (Carolyn Bennet) has been wonderful for the Arts Education community, but it is already in danger of being eliminated. This would further marginalize the Arts as a vital component of every child's education.

Adding the Arts Data to the School Report Card will make it much easier for communities, parents and students to measure how their schools compare to others, and will help point out inequities in Arts education that can then be addressed. This bill should not be a major added burden to RIDE since much of the needed data is already being collected via the RISCA funded Arts Education Data Dashboard, and would be coordinated by the RIDE Arts Education.

Again, I urge you to approve moving H-7020 to the full house for approval.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Shannan Davis

Choral Director and Music Curriculum Coordinator, Joseph L. McCourt Middle School, Cumberland, RI
Music Advocacy Co-Chair, RIMEA

"Teaching music is not my main purpose. I want to make good citizens. If children hear fine music from the day of their birth and learn to play it, they develop sensitivity, discipline and endurance. They get a beautiful heart."
Shinichi Suzuki

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