

**DCSBOE**

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**Testimony by Louise Kennelly**

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My name is Louise Kennelly, Executive Director of the DC Collaborative, and I am here to support the increase of art and music requirements for graduation and for awarding credit for proof of proficiency.

If we begin with our end goal in mind – to graduate high-achieving students ready to succeed in college and today’s job market, the high school arts and music requirement may do the most to prepare them.

Arts education ensures everything we as a nation say we care about: engaged students who stay in school, have healthy development, achieve academically, and graduate prepared to succeed in a 21<sup>st</sup> century information-based economy .

Any consideration of revised arts requirements should be linked to ensuring the development of 21st-century skills; help guide the preparation of next-generation of arts educators; and embrace new technology, pedagogy, and changing modes of learning. The innovation and creative skills honed by the visual and performing arts are central to learning today and should not be considered an add-on or simply enrichment—but central to a quality, relevant education

It is well-established that arts education develops problem-solving and critical thinking and entrepreneurship.

The arts are central to what employers demand: creativity, use of multi-media and technology, visual literacy, ability to be self-directed learners and to synthesize disparate sources of information.

We need to be at least as innovative as our students who are creating and advancing new modes of expression and communication every day, by delivering an effective education wherein the arts are more central to their learning and to education reform efforts.

Extending arts credit requirements will help ensure DC becomes a leader in using the arts for learning in a significant way. As arts requirements are increased, they should be aligned to the demands and expectations of employers and postsecondary institutions now and in the future and be inclusive of media arts, for example.

The DC Collaborative includes about 65 cultural institution members, including the Kennedy Center, Young Playwrights Theatre, American Poetry Museum, Sitar, Capitol Hill Community

Arts Workshop, Arena Stage, Washington Ballet and many others. We have a members mapping project that shows our members reach and programming in the schools (and after school) so that you may be interested in reviewing. It helps us to see the extensive contributions our members are already making to public school education in DC but we can begin to see where the gaps are and which schools are getting fewer opportunities from community partners.

By working with many of our members, students do become proficient and there should be a formal mechanism that reflects that mastery. But it should not come at the expense of the arts and music teachers who need to be in every public school in the district. That's because DC needs a coherent and comprehensive approach to arts education, one that advances sequential learning in the arts and builds on robust in-school as well as out-of-school resources in coordination rather than in a piecemeal fashion.

Many members have a Roster of teaching artists who are trained through a rigorous process and many members also offer professional development workshops available to public school teachers interested in building their skills in teaching in and through the arts. The Collaborative will cover the cost of up to three workshops for any DC public school teacher who wants to attend. So this program will help the district support the extension of arts requirements in this way.

Through our Arts Education Initiative working with 10 schools a third-party researcher Dr. Robert Horowitz from Columbia Teachers College showed how teaching through the arts boosted reading skills in 80 percent of student participants and created positive school climates here in DC, a necessary condition for learning.

National Coalition of Core Arts Standards has added media arts and the board may want to consider adding high school requirements in the media arts discipline, such as [digital art](#), [computer graphics](#), [computer animation](#), [virtual art](#), [Internet art](#), and interactive arts. Acknowledging those students who have met the requirements and also choose to go beyond the requirements by providing formal recognition when they demonstrate proficiency in the arts would also be an important step in encouraging increased arts proficiency.

When it comes to assessments, other states are trying a variety of approaches to arts assessments including both formative and summative assessments. Some are including on-line portfolio assessments as well as a state-level arts exam. A close look at what other states are doing that works well would be an important first step.

Condeleeza Rice, when announcing a report on education challenges in America that are placing our country's security at risk, she said arts should be central to school improvement efforts and called the attitude of arts as an extracurricular in this day and age 'appalling.' The

stakes are too high and the resources too abundant here in DC to not make arts a more central feature of our teaching and learning by expanding the arts high school graduation requirement and being creative and purposeful about how those requirements are met.