Strengthening Maryland's Arts Education Infrastructure: A Community Listening Session Report
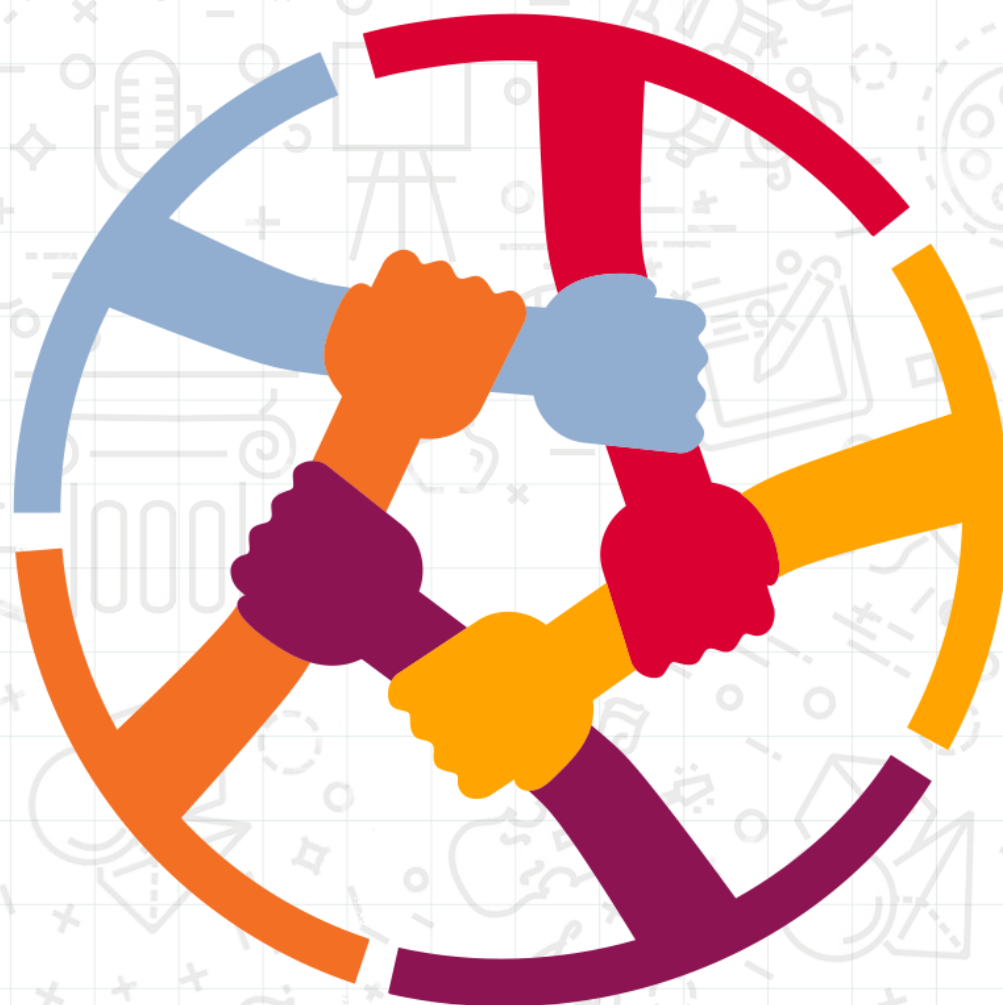
by Arts Education in Maryland Schools

(AEMS)

AEMS

Arts Education in Maryland Schools

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Executive Summary

Arts Education in Maryland Schools, AEMS, is the statewide arts education advocacy organization for the state of Maryland. Our mission is to mobilize power to communities by our advocacy programs, professional and leadership development and resource building and sharing. In order for us to meet our mission, we acknowledge that we must be extremely transparent and responsive to the needs of our constituents which include students, parents, community members, arts education advocates, fine arts supervisors, and educational policymakers.

This report compiles information from meetings that AEMS conducted with arts educators from across the state of Maryland from January 2020 to May 2020 as part of a community listening initiative. These Community Listening Sessions were designed as a forum for arts educators to directly communicate with AEMS regarding the needs in their individual local school systems, as well as an opportunity for AEMS to increase its outreach to, and to share advocacy resources with, educators. Originally conceived as a series of in-person convenings of arts educators in each of Maryland's 24 local school systems, the cataclysmic shifts of COVID-19 prevented most of the meetings from taking place as planned. AEMS regrouped to hold four virtual arts educator Community Listening Sessions, one session for each of the arts disciplines currently represented by a statewide professional association: Dance, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts. The more recently-added arts discipline of Media Arts does not yet have a professional educators' association established in Maryland. While arts

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educators and students were challenged with new technology, our findings show that the pandemic did more to expose and exacerbate existing issues of equity, access, and resource-distribution than create new problems.

Methodology

AEMS held Community Sessions on the following dates and locations, and for the following disciplines:

- January 28, 2020: Queen Anne's County Public Schools - Chesapeake College (All Disciplines)
- February 24, 2020: Baltimore County Public Schools - Carver Center for the Arts (All Disciplines)
- May 5, 2020: Visual Arts Educators - Zoom
- May 12, 2020: Music Educators - Zoom
- May 19, 2020: Theatre Educators - Zoom
- May 21, 2020: Dance Educators - Zoom

A total of 86 arts educators took part in these meetings.

Two AEMS staff members conducted these meetings:

- Quanice Floyd, Executive Director
- Peter Dayton, Programs & Operations Manager

Each of these meetings, whether online or in person, followed the same agenda:

- Introductions from the Executive Director
- An overview of AEMS
- Educators were invited to respond to six prompting questions
- Educators were invited to view others' responses to the prompting question.

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- Group discussion on the themes emerging from the responses
- Educators were invited to share personal stories of the positive impact of arts education in their communities and in the lives of their students
- Adjournment

After Maryland moved to virtual instruction in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, several of the six prompting questions were modified. The original questions were:

1. What does arts education look like in your community?
2. What challenges are you currently facing as an arts educator?
3. What would you like the future of arts education to look like in your community, the county, the state?
4. What do you need support with?
5. What does your arts classroom look like (environment, engagement, etc.)?
6. What types of professional development are you interested in?

The modified questions were:

1. What did your arts education community look like prior to COVID-19?
2. What do you need? How can AEMS help?
5. What types of professional development are you interested in facilitating?

    After the completion of these Community Listening Sessions, AEMS compiled the responses to these questions as well as the group reflections and shared stories of educators, organizing the information into the central themes that form the foundation of this report. All quotes within the report are transcribed responses from Maryland K-12 public school educators with minor edits for grammatical clarification.

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In addition to the transcribed quotes, the narrative report includes reproduced selections from the educators' shorter responses to the prompting questions. These are grouped first by which question the responses correspond to, then by thematic similarity within those responses. After the body of the report, there is an appendix which reproduces some of the educators' responses that are quoted in the narrative report. The appendix is organized into responses based to each of the individual questions. Within these questions, the responses are grouped into themes which AEMS created as part of its internal process of organizing this report. The selected responses are transcribed and reproduced as literally as possible.

Purpose of Meetings

AEMS's mission states mobilizing power to communities as one of its delivery methods for ensuring that all students in the state of Maryland have access to arts education. One avenue by which AEMS seeks to mobilize power to communities is by directly basing its programming in the concerns and issues of its constituents. AEMS held these community listening sessions to discover current trends and issues in the Maryland arts education ecosystem and to resolve issues that arise in order to strengthen Maryland's arts education infrastructure. After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, this purpose was expanded to ensure that AEMS was informed about the myriad of new challenges that educators faced in the switch to remote learning and further pandemic collateral damage to arts programs.

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Purpose of Report

AEMS's purpose of presenting this public-facing report on the findings from these community listening sessions is to ensure a transparent alignment of AEMS's work in information-gathering with our commitment to our value of community. AEMS seeks to illuminate and highlight the power communities have to make systemic change. This report uplifts and centers the voices of arts educators: both the current transformative impact that they have on their students as well as the impediments that prevent arts access, interfere with educators' delivery of instruction, and fail to provide necessary support for meaningful arts education. Additionally, the findings of this report necessitate a call to action for Maryland leaders to address local and systemic issues that arts educators around the state face. The needs and concerns that educators raised, which this report enumerates, will also form the basis of AEMS's advocacy efforts to ensure that Maryland leaders hear their constituents' call to action.

Theme: Perceptions of Arts Education

> *"I feel like schools are so driven by those standardized test scores, and that's the part that we need to get the message out: that we are helping to bring those scores up, whether they realize that it or not, we are."*

Based upon our findings, Maryland arts educators are working in an environment that does not recognize the value of their contributions. They reported working under administrators who believed that "art is just for fun, a hobby not equal to other pursuits (math, science, sports)" or even that arts classes are "babysitting," rather than understanding the research-proven value of the arts in learning and human development. Statutorily, arts disciplines are defined as core subjects (COMAR 13A.04.16), but in school scheduling and administrative settings, they are often given diminutives such as "specials," "enrichments," and "resources." These inaccurate designations reinforce school administrations' own priorities in scheduling and funding and create an artificial second-tier of subject areas, which can be cut or reduced with the easy justification that the arts are not essential areas of learning. This misperception of and misinformation around the arts has real consequences for educators that translates into allocation of resources, staffing, and scheduling. Educators reported "no ability to add staffing despite interest in growing the program," as well as erratic scheduling where "Music, Media, PE, and Art all had different amounts of minutes per class per grade level. They spoke of a

Report: Central Themes

 "huge disconnect between test-driven guidance and arts-learning." In speaking of their own vision for arts education in their schools, educators responded that they wanted the arts to be "appreciated, valued as much as core/AP/Honors Classes" or for the arts to be "a real class, with expectations that mirror core counterparts." A combination of the emphasis on standardized testing as student performance indicators and of the perceptions about the arts that administrators create through their choices of nomenclature and scheduling leads to a feedback loop that perpetually leaves the arts out of the picture.

> *"I think a lot of people don't realize what arts education is nowadays. I think people think of it the way it was when they were growing up. The art classes I had as a kid in the 80's were not the same as what we're providing to kids now. I don't think the parents necessarily always realize the high level of thinking that's going on. They think that they're just coloring stuff and they're like: 'I don't understand, why did my kid get a B on his coloring?' No, no, no! We're doing more than that."*

Theme: Arts Educator Experiences

> *"All lessons right now need to be open-ended. It has lost some of the personalization. I was always able to help guide students' hands when they weren't getting something. There is only so much we can do with the separation."*

Arts educators are working in an environment of constant financial instability. They report a fundamental lack of the financial and material resources to sustain their classrooms. In light of the perceptions of arts education created by school administration priorities and course labeling, arts educators fear for their program funding and employment. The issues presented by COVID-19 have only exacerbated these concerns, and worsened existing administrative biases towards standardized-tested courses. Arts educators' experiences include a "loss of programs due to staffing decisions," their continued employment is "uncertain," and "funding was being cut [prior to the pandemic]." They are persistent and creative in acquiring resources and using the resources they have, but responses revealed the total lack of infrastructure at schools and in school districts to support arts educators effectively delivering necessary instruction. They spoke to the challenges of "working with nothing, how to make an art program with no funds or when funds run out" and indicated needing support "getting materials without begging or doing Donorschoose."[1] Dedicated to their profession, arts educators become the

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1   Donorschoose is a crowdfunding aggregator website. In the past, AEMS has promoted the Donorschoose campaigns of Maryland Arts Educators who were raising funds for basic supplies for their classrooms.

fiscal lifelines to the underappreciated and under-resourced school arts programs. In principle, this is a burden which teachers should not have to shoulder in the first place: the state should fully fund public school educators' materials and programs. In practice, this onus further adds to the responsibilities of educators that subtracts from their time and energy for their instructional planning. In saving dollars, this model of funding creates an incalculable loss in potential learning and growth for students.

Surveyed educators spoke of a lack of the fundamental materials and time necessary to teach effectively. They do not have the funds available to purchase discipline-related equipment, with a particular emphasis on a lack of kilns from visual arts educators and musical educators noting decades-old instruments. Educators' visions of ideal classrooms included the most basic of items, such as "proper equipment & supplies" or "a classroom, not a cart or a closet that three people have to squish in with the servers." Students cannot fully engage with arts experiences without proper materials or space sufficient for the discipline.

Analogous to the lack of proper materials, educators are painfully aware that their students are receiving instruction based on insufficient planning. Overburdened with administrative and duties "NOT AT ALL related to our content,"[2] educators expressed exasperation that "30 minutes per day is not enough [planning time] when teaching pre K -5." With minimal staffing support, low-priority placement in course scheduling, and a perception that the arts are extraneous content, administrators often do not value their

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2   Emphasis original.

time. Even as this is demoralizing for educators, it ultimately hurts students, who are deprived of the full capacity of their instructors, who instead "have lunch duty 5 hours per week when we could be providing enriching programs and utilizing our expertise."

> *"I think there are currently a lot of good opportunities to go out of our community and perform or share artwork and do things, to take advantage of those opportunities, like in Baltimore City and other places. I would foresee a lot more kids taking advantage of those, and then us being there to push them and encourage them in that direction. The challenge for me is finding the time during the school day to work all that out."*

Along with insufficient funding, arts educators face a lack of space allocation within school buildings, with "not enough space for students to move," or no designated art room at all, with "art on a cart" as the inadequate substitute. Combined with scheduling that inflates class sizes, schools are not supplying arts educators with the equipment and physical spaces necessary for the practice of their art, directly impacting the quality of instruction and learning. In addition to a lack of access to adequate spaces and materials for their instruction, arts educators reported a lack of necessary support in their educational training to meet the total range of their students' needs. This ranged from requests for "para-educator support for those students with IEP/504 requirements" to "creating programs for FALS/CLS," "art therapy for social-emotional learners," and

more generally "students who need aid or supplemental materials."[3] While students with additional learning needs are often assigned to specialized instructors for other courses, all students are included in the same arts class schedules and teachers are expected "to do more than gen ed classes to 'make things equitable.'" These support and training needs have ballooned to include the pandemic-prompted need for technological hardware, software, and training to adapt to virtual instruction. Educators reported that "new teachers are not trained with student management, resulting in them leaving education within the first few years." There are serious equity issues attached to the distribution of technological resources, and teachers recognize the need for "more technology training for teachers and students, parents as well." Given the existing lack of material and financial support arts educators have experienced, arts courses have remained primarily hands-on experiences with little technology incorporated. Educators are looking for ways to lean into the creative capabilities of technology-based instruction to better deliver arts experiences to their students, so there is a need for "more content/lesson ideas for online art class," as educators recognize that future instruction will likely carry forward adaptations prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

3   IEP (Individualized Education Program), a 504 plan, FALS (Functional Academic Life Skills), CLS (Comprehensive Life Skills) all designate students who are legally required to receive additional learning resources.

Report: Central Themes

"I think that it is extremely important to embrace technology in terms of artistry. Particularly because students embrace and have embraced it way before now. We need to meet them where they are. Education has become antiquated in the minds of our students and I agree with them. I think that this is a time of opportunity to embrace this understanding that we need to change our mindsets to make education applicable, particularly arts in a technological world."

Beyond training in technology and pedagogy that serves the learning needs of all students, teachers are looking for ways to ensure that their curriculum is itself relevant to the identities, cultures, and needs of their students. They are eager for more resources on "contemporary artists, curriculum ideas and updates, engaging ways of teaching art history, opportunities for hands-on making/exploring new media." Along with "choice-based arts education," arts educators know that they can better energize students with curricula that provide a wide range of cultural voices and more contemporary artists.

"I've been trying to make art history more engaging for my students this year and I've been trying to make it more inquiry-based so they're more leading what we do with that time. At the beginning of the year we looked at Egypt and we started looking at paper, how it was made, how it was made today, how handmade paper is made, and then we went through our recycling bin and the whole project blossomed into a unit that they led something with their curiosity. A student told me 'I like this class so much because I'm learning more here than in history.'"

Theme: Student Experiences in Arts Ed.

> *"I was teaching this lesson from Bearden, and I got this text message from our secretary, whose child I teach. It's a video of the girl teaching the lesson to her family, with a little easel, giving the art history and everything. Those kinds of moments when someone takes what you've taught them, and it doesn't just end at 3:15 but it goes on, are really wonderful."*

Despite the adverse conditions through which they persevere, the educators surveyed reported the clear impact on the students they were reaching and some reported on the positive infrastructure that supports their work and access to arts experiences for students. At the same time, the structural lack of resources has led to inequitable conditions so that all students cannot fully participate when arts opportunities are available, arts classrooms are overcrowded and undersupported, and students' individual learning and behavioral needs go unmet. While AEMS surveyed educators and not students, the teachers above all prioritized the needs and experiences of the students, clearly connecting the administrative, scheduling, and funding decisions that affect their own experience as teachers downstream to the negative impact those decisions have on students' access to the whole-child growth potential of the arts.

On the positive side, educators from some local school systems responded that some arts disciplines are consistently available to their students, and that there are opportunities to celebrate student artistic

achievement. One educator reported that "we hold an 'arts night' event at my school. Every student has 1 or more works on display and music is performed." Another noted that "all elementary students have at least one visual art class per week."[4] Educators also shared numerous stories of the rewarding and transformative ways in which students connect with the arts disciplines and their instruction. One story among many included this anecdote:

> *At the school where I teach there are a lot of ESOL (English as a Second Language) kids, one of the kids whom I've got to play trombone is very musical. The ESOL instructor always stops me to thank me and says that the child is so different and more confident now that he has an interest in band.*

The purpose of this document is to report the total context that arts educators in Maryland experience and to bring attention to the necessary changes required to bring quality arts education to all of Maryland's public school students. The positivity of stories about the transformational power of the arts in our lives does not suggest that the conditions in which arts educators are working are adequate. The fact that arts educators are able to still accomplish so much for their students against their adverse conditions is a tribute to their dedication to their calling as teachers and

4   According to the Code of Maryland Regulations regarding Fine Arts Education (COMAR 13A.04.16.01A),schools are required to provide fine arts experiences in all five arts disciplines in elementary school. "Requirements for Fine Arts (Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theatre, Visual Art) Instructional Programs for Grades Prekindergarten—12.A. Each local school system shall:. 1) Provide an instructional program in fine arts each year for all students in grades prekindergarten—8 as follows:a) Within the prekindergarten—5 grade span, **students shall have experiences in the fine art forms of dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual art"** [emphasis added]

nurturers. The potential student growth that could be unlocked by such teachers being properly resourced and supported is nearly unimaginable. Sadly, students are currently trapped in a situation made by decisions outside of their control which directly impacts their access to arts experiences and their ability to effectively learn based upon their individual needs. Educators communicated to AEMS that there is a lack of professional development and support when it comes to student behavioral management and adequately providing resources, specialists, and training when working with students who have additional needs. Educators cited class sizes as high as 40 students, recognized that their arts programming was "not inclusive for ELL (English Language Learner) students," and that they needed appropriate training to effectively teach "students with trauma and special needs." It should be noted that, while arts educators face a lack of support when it comes to students with behavioral issues, "kids love coming to us and want us to be in their classes." Students' engagement with fine arts makes a difference in their students' behavior and motivation.

> *"I had a student years ago who was the 'problem child;' she wasn't making it in her other classes and the other teachers were complaining about her. But art was her thing. She came back a few years later and said that I was the teacher she connected with. Now she's using her art skills to make and sell jewelry and I brought her back to talk to my kids now. I always saw she was special, that really came through with the arts."*

Report: Calls to Action

Arts educators recognize that, overwhelmingly, they are undervalued by the decision-makers in their education ecosystems. Laid out above, arts educators and their students are caught in a cycle of trivializing the arts through terminology (specials, enrichments, resources), deprioritized scheduling, and lack of resources that creates a self-fulfilling prophecy for administrators' reported "low expectations." Administrators are also working at a disadvantage, being forced to make difficult decisions regarding funding and scheduling. This points AEMS in the direction of future convenings to further clarify the steps necessary to be able to effect change in the most vital areas of support for educators: funding & resources, staffing, physical space, and professional development. Even as we work towards those intricately balanced policy areas, there are simpler, easy changes that schools and administrators can make to begin to change the culture around the arts at their schools.

Recommendation 1

Make Language Changes from the Top Down that Acknowledge the Parity of Arts Courses with Standardized Test Courses.

Arts education, as we know it today, often is labeled as an "enrichment" or "special", however, according to Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) and ESSA, arts education is, in fact, a core subject. The use of this language over the years has created a gap in support from school districts around the state because they view the arts as a non-essential class for students, instead of realizing that arts learning is an integral part of a student's

holistic education. An educator suggested the term "ACE: Arts Content Education" as a replacement, if a replacement term is truly needed. Language that we have discussed about the arts as "specials", "enrichments", "resources", or other terms, needs to be removed from school culture. In addition to the harm that this terminology gives rise to, it incorrectly implies that arts content areas are less required than other subject areas. Legally, this is not true. The arts are one among many required content areas and should be classified equally as a first, minimal-effort step to changing the culture around negative perceptions and treatment of arts education.

> *"…that's what we were talking about too, how important arts integration is: for content teachers and for core teachers to implement these strategies in their classrooms. If they would just implement the arts integration strategies in their classrooms, those test scores would soar. That kind of understanding of education, is an area where we desperately need some professional development, to go into the classrooms and teach our grades 1 teachers through our high school teachers."*

Recommendation 2

Embrace and Support Interdisciplinary Connections between the Arts and Other Subjects

Another way that schools can elevate the arts and demonstrate its equal legitimacy to other subject areas is by embracing the intersection of the

arts and other subjects. Arts educators see a future in which instruction is "interdisciplinary - building the connections between the arts and sciences and humanities," so that the learning models best accessed through the arts can help students learn in other content areas as well. Integrating the arts requires simultaneous, standards-based instruction in both an arts discipline and a non-arts discipline. Moving towards integrating the arts could be an intermediary step for schools that, based upon their circumstances, are looking for ways to tap into the power of the arts for whole-child development, but do not have the resources to substantially grow their arts programs. Because arts education in Maryland already faces a crisis of credibility, it is necessary to emphasize that the integration of the arts presents a model in which arts learning and non-arts learning are combined to enrich the learning in both content areas and does not relegate arts learning to the position of being a condiment to spice up standardized test-area learning. Arts educators made clear that embracing the integration of the arts would require "funds to support arts integration PD" so that non-arts content teachers could learn standards-based arts techniques. Beyond the power that arts-based learning modalities have in arts integration, the fine arts are worthy of study in their own right.

> *"This is a large grand-scale idea, but I would love this: in my future, there is no hierarchy of subject matter; it's all equal."*

Recommendation 3

Removing Barriers to Access for Arts Education to Support Holistic Educational Experiences for Students

Arts education is an essential component of whole-child development. It possesses unique learning modalities, encourages significant cognitive and fine motor skills development, and is a key conduit for Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). By statute, Maryland public school students are entitled to education in all five fine arts education disciplines. The above recommendations are incremental steps towards repairing the arts subjects' reputational damage and to accessing the potential of arts learning in all subject areas. Overwhelmingly the vision that educators expressed is simpler, yet in our current system, far more radical: ALL Maryland public school students should have robust access to quality arts education in all five arts disciplines, PK-12. This learning should be aligned to the Maryland State Department of Education Fine Arts standards and the National Core Arts Standards; course offerings should be sequential and consistent; and the needs, identities, and interests of the students should be centered in their learning experience. In order for students to be centered, curricula and instruction needs to reflect the students, student interests need to lead the content, and financial access barriers need to be removed. An education system as surveyed educators envision it would be one in which "all students [are] able to take Art/Music every year," with learning being "sequential... consistent throughout the county." Not only would there be continuity of learning, but "all our students no matter their

income, race, or socio-economic status... achieve a high level of musicianship," with "College + Career pathways [with] fully explored options for students to experience."

"A unit I did last year went from one place to another; but we're often so restricted by things that are happening in the building outside of our classroom that we're afraid to let our children explore. This was two days of playing around with any material they found and wanted, and it wasn't part of the curriculum in any strict sense, but it was such a powerful experience in creating a special moment, watching our kids play and exploring and finding answers on their own with me facilitating. Those are great moments."

Recommendation 4

Invest in and support ALL Artistic Disciplines within Arts Education

Even as arts access in all disciplines across the whole state is inequitable and insufficient, there is a disproportionate lack of theater, dance, and media arts programs in Maryland. For theatre, the state of Maryland does not contain a single university that offers a program for theatre educator certification. This means that any educator pursuing certification in this arts discipline must conduct their education out of state in order to become qualified to teach in Maryland public schools, creating a disconnect in the educator program-to-classroom pipeline. With media arts added to the list of Maryland's arts disciplines in 2017 (and being a more recent area of

formalized study), there is scant evidence of media arts teacher certification programs in the entire United States.

> *"My students are attempting to stage a virtual musical because the show would otherwise be canceled. The students were crying, they were so happy that they could still make the musical happen. It was a huge cast show, and each student will be recording themselves and then it will be edited together. Kids have been proactive and excited to engage with it and [have] sent in content."*

Recommendation 5

Investing and Providing Support for Resources in Arts Education

In addition to the facility needs that teachers have articulated, arts educators are in need of access to technology resources: hardware, software, training, and stable internet connections. Before COVID-19, educators were facing issues of a lack of access to technology and equipment to support 21st century learning. This prior technology deficit made the sudden need to switch to virtual learning more difficult and has brought new challenges to arts educators. Being forced to suddenly adapt was a difficult experience (equally so for students), though in some cases it began a process of exposing educators to digital tools they might not have otherwise explored. Even as the COVID-prompted virtual instruction has greatly impacted the visual and performing arts, arts educators understand that the avenues that this shift has opened up for education will persist

even after safe, in-person instruction resumes. Surveyed educators would like to "continue and expand the online learning connections we are making with students" with a "balance between offline and online teaching." This will require "more technology and training for teachers and students" as well as intentional measures to ensure that all students have equitable access to the required technology.

> "...we don't get opportunities to see how we would like our school to look, within our county or elsewhere in another district... We used to go on field trips to other schools and districts. We went to another county and they did NOT want to share how they were doing things. They wanted to show us the results of their assessment practices but not what those were. They gave us some papers on what they were doing, and then collected them back up."

Recommendation 6

Building Professional and Personal Peer Support for Arts Educators around the State and within Their Disciplines

In prior sections, this report has reproduced educators' anxieties and frustrations about their lack of administrative support and their own unpreparedness based upon their lack of time and resources. They are looking for more ways to connect with their content areas, with their own creativity, and with each other through professional development (PD) experiences and professional learning communities (PLCs). Educators

spoke positively of their existing professional development experiences and they want more of them. Educators from each discipline articulated discipline-specific PDs they would be interested in, in addition to more general PDs about pedagogical techniques for young learners. They also spoke of a lack of connection even with other arts educators. Many of those surveyed desired to be part of a PLC to share resources and ideas in order to help new educators as well as meet new challenges through their collective knowledge. Surveyed educators revealed in their responses a wealth of knowledge that exists as an untapped resource. PLCs would allow them to consolidate their substantial knowledge and experience. In such urgent areas as "curriculum development for dance programs," "techniques for combining traditional media with digital tools" and "building [and maintaining] arts programs for urban education," arts educators responded that they would be willing to facilitate professional development experiences.

Educators also spoke to the need for wellness-based PD experiences. The most effective way to positively affect educators' health and wellness is to directly address the situations which are impacting their wellness: respect, funding, materials, space, adequate time. Wellness experiences cannot act as a palliative replacement for the fundamental transformation that arts education needs. However, these resources do make significant differences in educators' wellness. The teaching profession is stressful and challenging in the best of circumstances and educators are interested in PD opportunities that can help them develop and sustain wellness habits,

especially in light of COVID-19's accelerating effect on the nation's existing mental health crisis. In addition to more general personal wellness, educators expressed feeling disconnected from their identities as artists and wanted more opportunities to practice and sustain their own artistic practices.

Conclusion

Even as arts educators need direct financial and administrative support in all of the areas enumerated above, many of these changes necessary to provide the students with their legally-mandated equitable access to quality arts education occur at a level that will not be transformed overnight. As forward-thinking boards of education and administrators work towards those goals, there is potential to provide greater arts access through tapping into schools' larger community arts infrastructure. Generally, educators spoke positively about the arts within their communities, such as it existed. This included "numerous music programs in school, after school activities, PTSA involvement," "school art night, community art shows, [and] Art Club." The need for the arts is apparent in the number of parent and community organizations that support the arts. Even so, in a culture that prioritizes the results of standardized test scores, more needs to be done to communicate the impact of the arts to all education stakeholders and more can be done to use existing community arts resources to deliver arts experiences to students. Using data to support the impact of arts education will play a crucial role in moving arts education advocacy work forward.

AEMS's Commitments

> *"Any time you advocate for a program and the community comes in and the room is packed and nobody wants to leave, they're so glad that you provided an event for them to congregate. The families don't want to leave because they're all loving art, if everybody pushed that, the parents and the community would pick up on that."*

AEMS is committed to ensuring that all students in the state of Maryland have access to high quality arts education by mobilizing power to communities through advocacy programs, professional and leadership programs, and resource building and sharing. This report writes the roadmap of AEMS's own future actions and programming that can directly address the issues Maryland's arts educators have raised.

Educators communicated to AEMS that they need help finding a "voice for our place in the world, not sure anybody wants to hear about us." They reported needing comprehensive support in building their own confidence as self-advocates as well as "education for the County's leadership" on the importance of the arts for student growth. "I can teach but the behind the scenes (political - administrative) scares me," one educator responded. Another responded they needed "help with understanding what I as a teacher can do versus how to find who/where I go for various questions and support."[5] AEMS is actively involved in resource-building and sharing through initiatives such as our **Arts Education Access Report** and resources such as our **Sound Check** and arts education stakeholder pathway experiences. AEMS also leads the Higher Education in the Arts Taskforce

5   Emphasis original.

AEMS's Commitments

(HEATforce) that convenes experts from Maryland's institutions of higher education. This taskforce has historically played a role in facilitating the creation of arts integration teacher preparation programs in Maryland and will continue to create further resources for arts educators to prepare them to deliver quality arts instruction.

In the field of professional leadership and development, AEMS has heard the call of arts educators seeking anti-racism and inclusive pedagogy and responded in 2020 by piloting a symposium on anti-racism in arts education and collaborated with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Fine Arts Office to create the Anti-Racist Educations of the Arts Learning Lab (A-REALL) professional learning community. Both of these initiatives will continue moving forward. Empowering educators to become direct participants in the process of policy- and decision-making, AEMS will pilot an Arts Educator Campaign School in the fall of 2021. This program will equip educators to run for public office positions so that they can push for the policy changes they know firsthand are necessary in order to deliver quality arts education to Maryland's public school students.

What We're Doing

As a response to the community listening sessions, AEMS has been critically thinking about ways we can continue to support and fill the needs gap for stakeholders of the arts education ecosystem. Our programming falls into the three buckets of 1) advocacy, 2) professional and leadership development, and 3) resource building and sharing, and has evolved and adapted as we move into fiscal year 2022. AEMS is committed to ensuring

AEMS's Commitments

that we meet our vision of having all students in the state of Maryland engaged in arts experiences so that they can thrive in a healthy society. In Fall 2021, AEMS will continue hosting community listening town halls along with advocacy sessions for arts educators and parents to better understand the political system and the politics surrounding educational policy. As AEMS sees it, mobilizing power to our communities is truly the way for us to work creatively, collaboratively, and collectively so that we can make systemic changes.

To keep a culture of transparency, AEMS seeks to share how we're responding to the themes that came up in our community session conversations and organizing them based on our three buckets of programming. To address the constituents' needs from the community, AEMS will be implementing the following programs for FY2022 to both support and be responsive to the needs of arts education stakeholders around the state. AEMS will continue to host and facilitate a number of programs and community listening sessions in order to best inform our advocacy efforts and support the needs of arts education stakeholders:

I. Advocacy Programs
(Appendix Response Themes: 2e, 3a, 4d, & 5c)

- **#ThreadArtsEd:** Beginning in Spring 2022, AEMS will be hosting a new program, #ThreadArtsEd, which will be an opportunity for arts educators and teaching artists to convey the issues they are facing in their school communities to AEMS.
- **Arts Education Awareness and Access Forms:** As a response to the needs of the arts educators and the lack of access to arts education for

our students, AEMS has launched an Arts Education Awareness and Access Forms to support arts education stakeholders when issues arise in their own communities.

- **Advocacy 101 & Advocacy Institute:** Utilizing the feedback from AEMS's Educators Council and Ambassadors, we will be launching Advocacy 101 webinars this fall to teach specific skills and strategies to people who want to be more involved in arts education advocacy. In Summer 2022, AEMS will be hosting an advocacy institute to help arts education advocates strengthen their skills and build advocacy strategies for the upcoming school year and beyond. This event will feature several tracks including youth advocacy, teaching artists, arts educators, and parents.

- **AEMS Ambassador Program:** In 2020, AEMS launched the Ambassador Program to help arts education advocates to take action through advocacy. This year, we will be expanding this program to train arts education advocates to not only advocate for arts education but to also equip them with the tools to train those in their own school communities.

II. Leadership and Professional Development
(Appendix Response Themes: 2e, 4d)

- **Anti-Racist Educators in the Arts Learning Lab (A-REALL):** In partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education's Fine Arts Office, AEMS launched the pilot A-REALL cohort in early 2021. With feedback from program participants, AEMS will be working to expand the program to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our educators and students.

- **Arts Educator Campaign School:** AEMS believes in mobilizing power to communities to create systemic change. In order to do this, we must

examine where the most power is and discover how we can shift that power to those who are on the ground, doing the work. This Fall 2021, AEMS, in partnership with Maryland Citizens for the Arts, will be launching our inaugural Arts Educator Campaign School program to equip arts educators around the state to organize and run for political office so that we can create systemic policy changes for our students and school communities.

- **Arts Education Symposium for Anti-Racism:** Due to the high amounts of interest at the 2020 event, AEMS has made the Arts Education Symposium for Anti-Racism our yearly anchor event. This symposium will bring together national thought leaders, arts educators, teaching artists, and arts organizations to explore how to implement anti-racism strategies into their own classroom and fieldwork.

- **Partnerships with MSDE (Maryland Center for Creative Classrooms, Maryland Micro Credentials):** AEMS will continue to support the Maryland State Department of Education's Fine Arts Office by continuing to serve as a fiscal sponsor for all of their professional development programs.

III. Resource Building and Sharing
(Response Themes: 1a, 1c)

- **Advocacy Resources:** In October 2020, AEMS relaunched our website and created advocacy pathways for different arts education stakeholders. As we continue to gather feedback from our constituency, we will ensure that our website and advocacy resources are relevant by creating a responsive feedback loop with constituents and our volunteers. AEMS is also currently working on a number of resources to create an advocacy hub on our website.

- **Arts Education Data:** AEMS identifies that we cannot do advocacy work without support of qualitative and quantitative data. AEMS will be

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expanding our research in order to create a statewide arts education data infrastructure that can support the work that our educators, and fine arts supervisors do every day. This data will also help AEMS create a standardized set of talking points when developing relationships with stakeholders and policymakers.

- **Workshops:** AEMS has been active in facilitating advocacy workshops and has worked extremely closely with the arts educator professional associations to distribute resources and tools. AEMS will continue to support arts education stakeholders via workshops throughout the school year.

Meeting Question	Response Theme	Selected Responses	AEMS's Role in Response
#1 What did your arts education community look like prior to COVID-19?	1a. Negative Impacts from Dismissive Attitudes Towards the Arts	• No ability to add staffing despite interest in growing program. • Not inclusive for ELL students. • Administration has low expectations of students. • Art is just for fun / a hobby not equal to other pursuits (math, science, sports). • Restricted scheduling (difficult choices for students).	Resource-Building & Sharing
	1b. Mixed Student Experiences	• We hold an "arts night" event at my school. Every student has 1 or more works on display and music is performed. • Not inclusive for ELL students. • Participation in shows outside of the community can be a challenge b/c come students have limited access to transportation. • Commitments to showcasing student talents (exhibits, concerts, and dance recitals).	Advocacy Programs
	1c. Potential in larger community arts infrastructure	• Numerous music programs in school/after school activities/PTSA involvement. • Art Academy in Easton weekend & afterschool programs for adults & students. MANY theatrical & choral opportunities. • School art night, community art shows, Art Club. • Visibility county-wide with Dance Festivals.	Resource-Building & Sharing

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#2 What Do You Need? / What Challenges Are You Facing? How Can We Help?	2a. More Student Support / Classroom Management	• Expected to do more in gen ed classes to "make things equitable." • Teaching students with trauma and special needs with appropriate training. • Not have two classes merged into one that is 30+ students is too much. • New teachers are not trained with student management, resulting in them leaving education within the first few years. • Sometimes CLS come to art w/out a helper = not good.	Partnership with MSDE
	2b. Material, Spatial, and Temporal Resources	• TIME: we have lunch duty 5h/week where we could provide enriching programs and utilizing our expertise • Many of our school-owned instruments are now 20 or more years old. It would be great to have some newer school instruments for students to use. • A classroom, not a cart of a closet that three people have to squish in with the servers. • Doing "other" duties NOT AT ALL related to our content. • Budget available the full year.	Advocacy Programs
	2c. Program Funding	• Equal level of class priority in comparison to other disciplines. • Administrators who have no idea the value arts bring to the students & building! • Uncertain Continued employment	Advocacy Programs

		would be good. • Loss of programs due to staffing decisions.	
	2d. Technology Resources	• Teachers need training in online teaching; students need devices & internet access. • Technology limitations for supporting learning 21st century skills. • More web tools... music has specific programs, visual arts not so much. • Full class technology.	Partnership with MSDE
	2e. Assistance in Advocacy	• Voice for our place in the world, not sure anybody wants to hear about us. • All admin in all levels [should] take as many Arts based continuing ed classes as they do reading, math, and such. • Admin understanding our role and purpose. Misunderstanding of community and/or school staff on the importance of the ART. • Education for the County's leadership on each of the Arts our county provides.	Advocacy Programs, Professional & Leadership Programs

#3 What would you like the future of arts education to look like in your community, the county, and the state?	3a. The Arts Are Valued	- Appreciated, valued as much as core/AP/Honors Classes. - We take art seriously and it helps students learn other concepts. - Where art class (in middle school) is every bit as important as math & reading - a "Core" class as well! - Funding structures that support staffing, curriculum development, PD, etc. - Change norm which names arts ed as "resource," "specials," to Arts Content Education (ACE).	Advocacy Programs
	3b. Arts Programming Is Student-Centered	- More public opportunities to show art, look like more time with kids, to see kids more often. - Engaging arts education programs that evolve with the art form. - Local funding pipelines, for creation of new work and to support schools. - Addressing the important needs of social justice, race, gender, and sexuality, and identities - College + Career pathways w/fully explored options for students to experience. 21st century curriculum: -thematic, -student-driven, -choice-based, -representation of artists of color/women, -aligned to National Standards - Finding a way for all our students no matter their income, race, or socio-economic status to achieve a high level of musicianship"	Partnership with MSDE, Professional and Leadership Programs

	3c. The Arts Are Accessible and Integrated	- All students able to take Art/Music every year - Sequential 6->7->8, school, community, consistent throughout the county - Dance program in every public school Pre-K-12 Interdisciplinary - building the connections between the arts & sciences & humanities - Opportunity for arts integration pk-12	Advocacy Programs
	3d. A Place for Technology in the Arts	- Traditional and virtual component to the curriculum. - I would like to continue and expand the online learning connections we are making with students. - More technology and training for teachers and students. - Balance between offline and online teaching	Partnership with MSDE
#4 What Do You Need Support With?	4a. Support in Meeting Student Needs	- Creating programs for FALS/CLS. - Students with varying instruction needs (not just for IEPs/504s). - Para-educator support for those students w/IEP requirements. - Students who need aid or supplemental materials. - Administrator PD (Sharing updates/best practices).	Partnership with MSDE, Professional and Leadership Programs

	4b. Technological / Administrative Support	• Support from administration (lack of understanding of content). • Working w/Maryland State Art Standards...that align w/curriculum / State standards. • Technology for students in the classroom. • More technology training for teachers and students, parents as well"; "professional development with new technologies"; "managing students' work"; "using one digital system for grades, SLO's, assessments, etc."; "online teaching tips, how to's, what not to do"	Partnership with MSDE
	4c. Material Needs / Funding	• Facilities that MEET space standards. • Getting materials without begging or doing Donorschoose. • Funding for instruments for low-income students. • A performance space; a real stage. • Materials to be more hands-on. Instruments - things to make instruments - I don't have access to instruments for students to play so I am limited in what I can do to teach instruments.	Advocacy Programs

	4d. Advocacy Assistance	• I can teach but the behind the scenes (political - administrative) scares me. • Help with understanding what "I" as a teacher can do versus how to find who/where I go for various questions and support. • Actual context & explanation of initiatives & how they relate / work with the arts. • Student and parent understanding of opportunities in HS (VPA). • Helping staff understand that arts integration is not doing an art project after a story.	Advocacy Programs, Professional & Leadership Programs
#5 What Types of Professional Development Are You Interested In?	5a. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)	• Tips and tricks no one thinks to teach you about. • Can we just meet together and have time together please? • Working in PLC's/grade level teachers in county to build curriculum together. • Organization strategies & tips from teacher to teacher.	Partnership with Professional Associations, MSDE
	5b. Educator Wellness and Growth Nurturing	• ART MAKING (like we do). • Personal wellness (fitness, relax, yoga). • Music making / activity-centered PD. • Professional artists coming to inspire us.	Partnership with Professional Associations, MSDE
	5c. Funding and Advocacy	• Working with nothing, how to make an art program with no funds or when funds run out. • The politics of getting back from administration.	Advocacy Programs

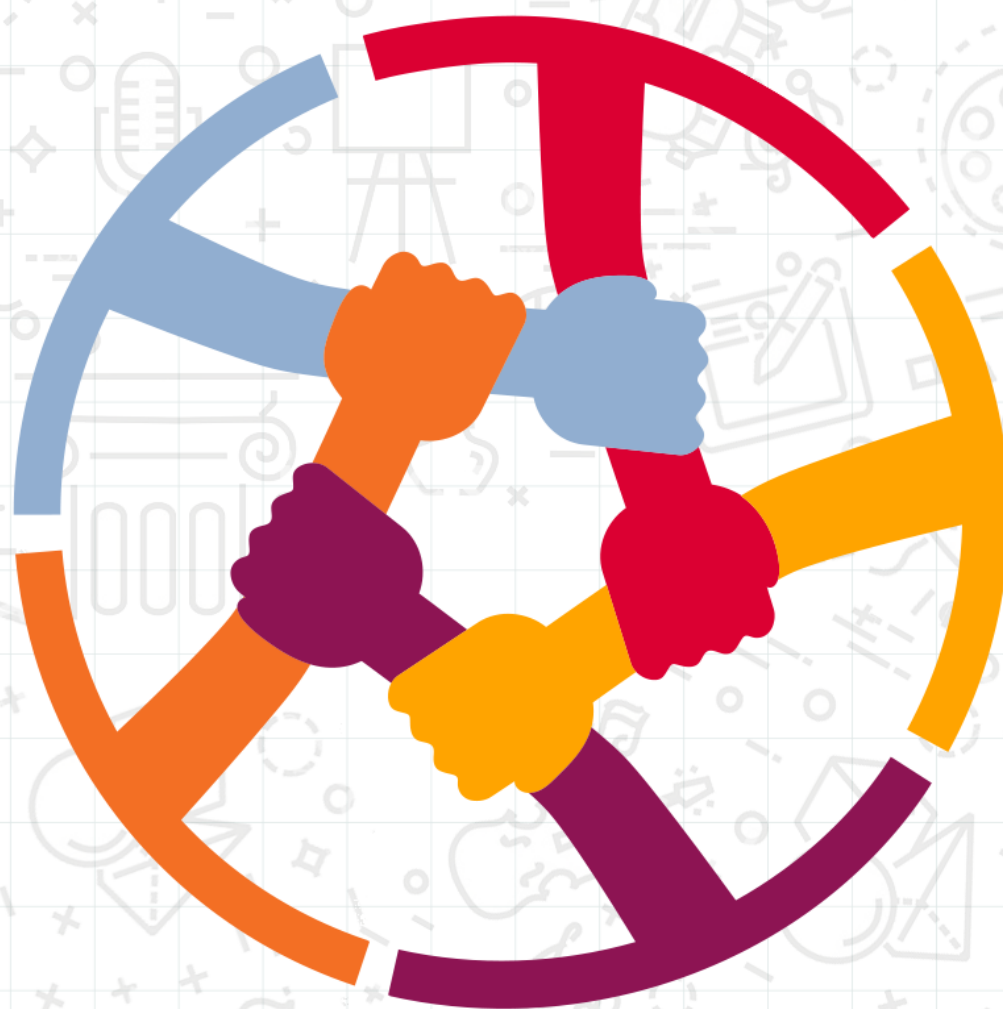|			
		• Working with the odds and ends that you have. • Training admin to UNDERSTAND THE ARTS.	
	5d. Technology Readiness	• For teachers - using online tools for arts teaching; access to devices & internet for students. • Training for online teaching, learning about new programs to enhance our teaching. • Using technology effectively and efficiently.	Partnership with MSDE
	5e. Meeting Students' Needs	• Special ed! Strategies, lessons, differentiation. • Diversity & inclusive education. • Contemporary artists, curriculum ideas & updates, engaging ways of teaching art history, opportunities for hands-on making/exploring new media. • Art therapy for social-emotional learners. • Strengthening bonds with family for support.	Partnership with MSDE, Professional and Leadership Programs
	5f. Instructional Technique PDs	• "Guides" or learning new art techniques/ideas not from supply companies. • BCPS vis. arts PD is awesome - I just wish we had more PD days. • How to measure creativity and thinking. • Creative and alternate ensembles. • How to run an art show (1st years). • Arts integration.	Partnership with Professional Associations, MSDE

#6 What Types of Professional Development Are You Interested in Facilitating?	6. Educator Responses	• Building/Maintain Arts Programs for Urban Education. • Techniques for combining traditional media with digital tools. • Working with what you have. • Assessments for the arts. • Curriculum development for dance programs. • Meaning-making through art.	Partnership with Professional Associations, MSDE
#7 What Does Your Classroom Look Like?	7a. Current State of Classrooms	• Not enough space for students to move. • Beautiful mess. • Tables larger than students; 5 to a table meant for 4 students. • Minimal storage, bulky desks that limit movement. • Some engaged, some not; high ELL student population.	Advocacy Programs
	7b. Envisioning the Future	• Not 37 students jam packed!!! • Proper equipment & supplies. • 5 tables w/5 chairs each, 2 single "safe space" desks, 1 teacher desk. • Mentoring opportunities with working local artists of all ages -sensory stimuli for all senses -space to interact with nature.	Advocacy Programs, Professional and Leadership Programs

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Arts Education in Maryland Schools

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