

March 1, 2023

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Subject: Key Issues Affecting Maryland Arts Educators

To Superintendent Choudhury:

Each March, school systems across the United States celebrate National Arts In Our Schools Month. With individual celebrations for each of the nationally-recognized arts disciplines, the month features celebrations of the dedication and impact of arts educators on the lives of our students. Each year AEMS highlights the accomplishments and triumphs of Maryland's arts educators with activities and programming throughout the month. During this month, with support of the statewide dance, music, theatre, and visual art education professional organizations, we invite you to demonstrate your commitment to year-round support of arts education by promptly addressing the following concerns:

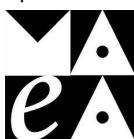
State Arts Education Leadership

Since December 2021, the MSDE position supervising the content area of Fine Arts has been vacant. Both AEMS and Maryland's four statewide arts education professional associations (MAEA, MDEA, MMEA, MTEA) have written to your office requesting action on this matter, as it has significant consequences for Maryland's arts educators and the quality of instruction Maryland's public school students receive, particularly with the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland Schools. We appreciate the initial response to this letter and the swift posting of the position in the fall of 2022. To date, however, the position remains vacant and there has been no transparency or communication around the timeline and progress of this hiring process.

An additional consequence of the extended delays in the process of hiring state-level leadership for the content area of fine arts is that the Fine Arts Education Advisory Panel, a state-mandated entity (COMAR 13A.04.16.02) has not been convened since the departure of the previous Coordinator of Fine Arts (December 2021). COMAR requires that "The State Superintendent of Schools shall maintain a Fine Arts Education Advisory Panel that shall advise the Superintendent on issues and best practices relevant to fine arts education for students in Maryland."

Certification for Elementary Theatre Educators

The Maryland Theatre Education Association (MTEA) delivered a letter to you in December 2021 regarding the lack of P-6 Theatre certification in the state of Maryland, containing recommendations to rectify this lack and the interconnected issues in Maryland's infrastructure which perpetuate this. MTEA proposed a working partnership with MSDE in order to improve the state of Theatre education in Maryland, providing a timeline for resolution concluding in December 2022. We have heard nothing from MSDE since acknowledgment that the letter has been received.

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Transparency and Communication

The policy changes and decisions made by this office affect educators and students across the state. Prompt updates from your office on the pressing matters outlined above would be a step in establishing a trust with educators and education advocates. With the recent history of the un-communicated, disruptive delay in the availability of the Fine Arts Initiative Grant for local school systems that took place in the summer and fall of 2022, trust is currently lacking. AEMS, MAEA, MDEA, MMEA, and MTEA encourage the office of the Superintendent to engage more frequently and transparently with the arts education community. We look to you for the swift resolution of these issues and to more proactive communication in the future.

We respectfully request updates to these areas of concern for Maryland's arts educators. We hope to celebrate as many victories for Maryland's arts educators as possible during March, and hope to include updates or positive developments from MSDE on these areas in the good news we share with the arts education community.

Sincerely,

Rachel McGrain
Executive Director, AEMS

DocuSigned by:

Sherri Fisher

President, Maryland Art Education Association

DocuSigned by:

Sandra Atkinson

President, Maryland Dance Education Association

DocuSigned by:

Brian Schneckenberger

President, Maryland Music Educators Association

DocuSigned by:

Julian Lazarus

President, Maryland Theatre Education Association

For more information on national celebrations of the arts in each discipline, see the following links:

- [Dance in Our Schools Month, Maryland Dance Education Association \(MDEA\)](#)
- [Music in Our Schools Month, Maryland Music Educators Association \(MMEA\)](#)
- [Theatre in Our Schools Month, Maryland Theatre Education Association \(MTEA\)](#)
- [Youth Art Month \(Visual Art\), Maryland Art Education Association \(MAEA\)](#)