

Arts Education in the Time of a Pandemic: ***COVID-19 Reopening Guidelines for Massachusetts PreK-12 Arts Programs***

The future of Arts Education in our public schools is at a critical point in time. As COVID-19 spreads across the globe, schools everywhere are adapting education plans in response to this pandemic. We know that when arts education thrives and is alive throughout the Commonwealth, students, families and communities benefit. Arts classes provide students a safe space to express themselves creatively, allow them to make personal connections that last a lifetime, and help them grow in all five of the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies. Parents come together to celebrate student artists' performances and gallery exhibitions. Communities benefit from engaged, focused and community-minded student leaders, animated by arts education. And at this time, the arts lift voices of students to engage in positive social change. It is important that education, funding, and staffing for the arts are maintained to accomplish these outcomes. The Massachusetts Arts Coalition* believes that arts educators and administrators must support balanced, comprehensive, and high-quality arts education for all students by promoting best professional practices, both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The arts can and should continue to be a part of a well-rounded education for students across the Commonwealth. While the delivery of instruction may look different during this period, the value to students remains consistent and vital.

This document serves as guidance for PreK-12 schools, administrators, and arts educators as they plan for the 2020-2021 school year to ensure they can continue to provide meaningful arts instruction for all students in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts Arts Coalition believes that*

- Funding and staffing for arts education must be maintained at levels at least equal to those prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Students must have continued access to arts education through periods of distance learning and altered school schedules.
- Arts educators must be included in planning. Learning environments and materials can vary considerably from non-arts classrooms.
- Professional development must be provided to arts educators, so that they may develop strategies for the delivery of arts instruction that can be adapted to a variety of learning environments and conditions.
- The arts are a cultural necessity that belong to everyone.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education states in the 2019 Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for Arts that “All Massachusetts students will develop artistic literacy through active participation in the arts, expressing creative ideas with skill, confidence and artistic intent. A high-quality arts education empowers students to take artistic risks and supports the social emotional and learning needs of all students...A rigorous progression of learning and engagement with the arts throughout PreK-12 education is the foundation for a rich, lifelong relationship with the arts.” In the 2019 Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for Arts the Massachusetts

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education states “the Arts are important to a well-rounded education.” Federal education legislation of 2015 (the “Every Student Succeeds Act”) defined a well-rounded education as one that includes the arts.

Guidelines for Arts Educators

- Be innovative in lesson design, differentiating and providing choice in assignments while maintaining a rigorous, standards-based curriculum.
- Design lessons connecting students to the real world.
- Create a sense of community in both the physical and virtual classrooms.
- Engage students positively in their work.
- Engage in culturally responsive teaching practices that aim to engage all students.
- Provide opportunities for concerts/productions/art exhibits, and other community events virtually or with social distancing practices in place. Consider private streaming and outdoor performances.

Health and Safety Guidelines for Classroom Environment and Materials

- Teachers and students wear masks or face shields, following state health guidelines.
- Ensuring physical distancing in all spaces per state guidelines.
- Increased and equitable access to hand sanitizer/installation of additional hand sanitizing stations.
- Increased cleaning and disinfecting of all high touch surfaces.
- Use of technology to reduce reliance on face-to-face interactions.
- Ensure students have equal access to the following:
 - Discipline-specific supplies and materials, such as consumable art materials, instruments, etc.
 - Appropriate and adequate technology resources, including training on specific platforms and/or devices
- Consider having a permanent classroom set-up.
- Consider staggered and assigned seating to ensure social distancing measures.
- Develop a classroom environment that limits students touching surfaces unnecessarily.
- Develop a COVID-19 guidance document that is discipline-specific for students posted in a visible place in the physical classroom and available to students and parents in a virtual format.
- Health screening checklists for visiting artists, audience members, etc.

Scheduling

- Blend synchronous and asynchronous learning.
- Schedule arts classes as an expected part of the day/week for all students and ensure accessibility.
- Provide a schedule that allows for disinfecting of space and materials.

- Ensure that instructional space for the arts is maintained.
- Utilize auditoriums, cafeterias, or other large spaces as available to provide for appropriate social distancing measures.
- Ensure arts education receives instructional minutes that are proportional to pre-COVID levels compared to other subjects.

Professional Development

- Provide content specific opportunities for professional development for arts educators.
 - Using technology in content area to support creation of high-quality learning materials.
 - Best practice for remote learning in the arts classroom.

Massachusetts Arts Coalition*

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[Massachusetts Educational Theatre Guild](#) - METG

[Massachusetts Music Educators Association](#) - MMEA

[Boston Area Kodály Educators](#) - BAKE

[Massachusetts College of Art and Design](#)

[Massachusetts Dance Education Organization](#) - MADEO

[Massachusetts Instrumental & Choral Conductors Association](#) - MICCA

[The New England Chapter of American Orff Schulwerk Association](#) - NE/AOSA

Contributors

Cecil Adderley, President MMEA, Chair-Music Education Department, Berklee College of Music

Heather Cote, President-Elect MMEA, K-12 Director of Performing Arts, Westwood Public Schools

Alice Gentili, Advocacy Liaison MAEA, K-12 Visual Arts Department Chair, Mendon-Upton Regional Schools

David Gresko, President MICCA, Director of Instrumental Music, Concord-Carlisle High School

Patricia Kammerer, President-Elect BAKE; Assistant Professor of Music Education, Rhode Island College

Michael LaCava, Executive Director MMEA, K-12 Director of Performing Arts, Wellesley Public Schools

Melissa Mastrolia, President MAEA, K-6 Visual Arts Educator, Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools

Adam N. McLean, President BAKE, Somerville Public Schools

Coni Moore, Past President MAEA, Winthrop Public Schools

Nancy Moses, Past President, MADEO, Professor Emerita of Dance, Bridgewater State University

Karin Puffer, President, NE/AOSA, K-6 General Music Specialist, Westborough Public Schools

Jonathan Rappaport, Executive Director Emeritus, Arts|Learning, Founder of the Kodaly Music Institute

Emily Ruddock, Executive Director, MASSCreative

Donna Wresinski, Chairperson of the Board METG, K-12 Director of Fine and Performing Arts, Framingham Public Schools

