

January 22, 2020

Milwaukee Board of School Directors
Milwaukee Public Schools
5225 W Vliet St
Milwaukee, WI 53208



To the Milwaukee Board of School Directors:

"Art is not a mirror to reflect reality, but a hammer with which to shape it." — Bertolt Brecht

We request that the Board consider approval and development of the attached Milwaukee Public Schools Art Education Policy presented by current practicing art teachers organized as the Milwaukee Art Educator Committee of the Milwaukee Teacher Education Association.

We believe that every MPS student deserves an equitable developmentally appropriate art education that is responsive to their diverse cultural and lived experiences. The arts celebrate multiple perspectives, problem-solving, creative risk-taking, dialogue, self-reflection, personal expression, perseverance and envisioning solutions. Art has the potential to help students cope with trauma and empower their voice and agency. We believe that, "...the arts are a particularly potent way to activate imagination and a broader understanding of injustice, its consequences, and the range of alternative possibilities." (Bell and Desai, 2011). We wish to support the success and retention of early career teachers, especially those whose own identities mirror the demographic of our students. Accomplishing these goals will require trust and cooperation between all vested players in the work of educating our students, the future citizens of Milwaukee. This includes teachers as the frontline practitioners, district administrators, and partnerships with local universities and arts organizations. The staffing of full-time, well prepared and licensed art teachers who are permanent members of the schools in which they serve will help us to achieve these goals.

We believe that not only MPS, but Milwaukee, is worth fighting for. We celebrate the people, energy, arts and culture that are flagships for the State of Wisconsin. We also recognize the overwhelming need to be advocates in the fight against the segregation and socio-economic hardships that persist in our City. We wish to work together to equip our students to be successful citizens and future leaders in our communities.

The authors of this MPS Art Education Policy Proposal are both early career and veteran teachers, elementary through high school, and from all regions in the City of Milwaukee. Not only are we MPS teachers, we are also artists, patrons of the arts, neighbors, voters, homeowners and parents of MPS students. Most importantly, we aspire to be fierce advocates for our students and their families. As workers for the largest employer in Milwaukee, we share a common cause with our students, as their learning conditions are our working conditions. Following the successful Board resolution for music education and in advance of voting for the MPS referendum, now is the time for us to speak out as advocates for strong and equitable art programs for all of the students of MPS.

Art Action Milwaukee

MPS Art Education Policy Proposal

Presented by the Milwaukee Art Educators Committee of the MTEA



Equity

- All students pre-K—12 in Milwaukee Public Schools deserve an equitable, developmentally appropriate, comprehensive art education taught by licensed art educators.⁵
- Art curriculum, practices, resources and support shall be responsive to the diverse cultural, socio-economic and lived experiences of all students in MPS, including students of color, LGBTQ+, immigrant, English language learners and students with disabilities.³
- MPS hiring practices shall focus on the recruitment, support and retention of teachers who reflect the diverse student population of MPS.²
- MPS teachers and students shall have opportunities to strengthen the practices of social justice, critical pedagogy and cultural sustainability within MPS art programs.¹

Staffing

- Art instruction shall be provided for all students pre-K—12 by employees of MPS who hold the 1550 art educator license.⁷
- Each MPS art educator shall serve a maximum of 500 students.
- Each one full-time art educator position shall be filled with placements of no more than two schools.
- Full staffing of art educators shall be budgeted through Central Office.

Recruitment and Hiring Practices

- MPS administrators shall work with art educator training programs at universities and colleges to invite, recruit, and support teachers of color.
- Financial supports for the recruitment and training of art educators into the District should be provided in a manner that is both transparent and equitable.
- MPS administrators shall recruit, hire and retain successful student teachers training in MPS schools.
- MPS administrators shall improve the timeline for the accessible public posting of available positions in order to align to the availability of recent graduates, and to be competitive with other districts.
- Applications for new hires shall be processed in a timely manner.

New Teacher Support & Retention

- MPS administrators shall implement meaningful, consistent and equitable mentorships for art teachers in each of their first three years teaching for MPS.

- Mentorships shall provide support for the practices of social justice, critical pedagogy and cultural sustainability.²
- Mentors shall hold experience that is specific to art content, appropriate grade levels and the individual school's program.
- All art educators shall be provided with supportive pathways for networking.
- MPS administrators shall support the retention of individual art teachers within each school in order to build stronger art programs with sustaining relationships between students, staff and community.

Privatization/Community Partnerships

- In tandem with working toward full staffing of licensed art teachers, there shall be no redirecting of MPS funds for private contracted arts services before full staffing as described above.
- Community artists contracted through the District shall work in mutual collaboration with the licensed art teacher/s staffed at the school in which the community artist is working.⁷

Professional Development

- All MPS art teachers shall be provided with frequent opportunities for meaningful professional development that includes studio practices (including new technologies), curriculum writing, instructional strategies, effective assessment, connecting to community resources and historic/contemporary art movements.
- MPS art teachers shall be given opportunities to become leaders in the visual arts content area and in arts integration across the curriculum, with support to work with teams of teachers at the school level to plan, implement and assess arts integrated curriculum.⁷
- Professional development for art teachers shall include participation in professional learning communities in various formats; including peer-to-peer mentoring (for new hires in particular), curriculum sharing events, and programs with local art museums, community arts/cultural organizations, and local universities.⁷
- Professional development shall be responsive and relevant to the needs, talents, and cultures of individual school communities.
- Individual art educators shall have the flexibility to pursue alternative professional development in order to meet the needs of their specific school community.
- Professional development shall provide support for the practices of social justice, critical pedagogy and cultural sustainability.¹

Conditions for Quality Instruction of Art

- District administrators shall be responsible for ensuring that the following hours of instruction are met:
 - Each student in grades K-3 and K-4 shall have regular art instruction for no fewer than 30 minutes per week.

- Each student in grades K-5—2 shall have regular art instruction for no fewer than 60 minutes per week.
 - Each student in grades 3—5 shall have regular art instruction for no fewer than 75 minutes per week.
 - Each student in grades 6—8 shall have regular art instruction for no fewer than 100 minutes per week, or the equivalent as averaged annually.
 - Each art class in grades 9—12 shall meet at least three times weekly for a minimum of 120 minutes per week.⁶
- Art teachers shall instruct no more than six classes daily.
 - Art class sizes shall be consistent with the class sizes of other content areas.
 - Prep time for art schedules in high school and middle school shall be equivalent to the schedules for other content areas. Prep time for art schedules in elementary and K-8 shall reflect the needs of managing space and materials for a school-wide art program.⁷
 - Elementary and K-8 art schedules shall include a minimum of five minutes between classes for transitioning groups, not to be counted as prep time.
 - Secondary students shall be required to take necessary prerequisites before any advanced classes.
 - Art instruction shall be conducted in a designated classroom that is appropriate to studio practices and the study of art, including appropriate storage space, furniture, technology, tools and sink access.
 - Art material budgets shall be a minimum of \$5 per student served. Art material budgets shall provide the necessary supplies, equipment and technology to meet National and State Standards.⁷

Sources Cited

1. Lee Anne Bell & Dipti Desai (2011) *Imagination Otherwise: Connecting the Arts and Social Justice to Envision and Act for Change: Special issue Introduction, Equity & Excellence In Education*, 44:3, 287-295, DOI [10.1080/10665684.2011.591672](https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2011.591672)
2. Cosier, Kim. "On Whiteness and Becoming Warm Demanders." *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* 36 (2019) Print.
3. Knight, Wanda B. "Culturally Responsive Teaching in Art Education." *The International Journal Of Arts Education* 13.1 (2015) 70-84. Print.
4. Amelia M.Kraehe & Kendall Crabbe (2020) *Art Education in the Face of Injustice*, Art Education,73:1, 4-7, DOI: [10.1080/00043125.2020.1690915](https://doi.org/10.1080/00043125.2020.1690915)
5. Kraehe, Amelia M. & Acuff, Joni B. "Theoretical Considerations for Art Education Research." *The National Art Education Association Studies in Art Education: A Journal of Issues and Research* 54.4 (2013) 294-304. Print.
6. *Milwaukee Public School, Community Task Force Report*. Milwaukee, WI: (December 12, 2019)4-7. PDF
7. Art Education Association. [NAEA Platform \[and Policy\]: The Value of Education in the Arts](#). Alexandria, VA. Web. March, 2019