

2011

Art & Music in West Virginia Elementary Schools



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The delivery of West Virginia 21st Century Art and Music Content Standards requires a thorough understanding of those subjects as well as knowledge of art and music pedagogy. Teachers possessing endorsements in elementary education are currently permitted to teach both general art and general music through grade 6. This is problematic for the following reasons:

- Although elementary teachers are also permitted to teach the other core content areas (reading/language arts, math, science and social studies), very few have the educational background necessary to deliver the Content Standards in art and music. In contrast to those subjects, it is possible that an individual entering a teacher preparation program at an institution of higher education (IHE) has not had an art or music class since grade 8. Since no high-stakes standardized assessment is currently given in the arts on the secondary level, it is unknown whether a student graduating high school has mastered the standards in those two subjects.
- The art and music coursework required in teacher preparation programs for elementary endorsement at IHEs in West Virginia is extremely inconsistent and minimal at best. Some IHEs require as few as two hours in art and music combined, while others require as much as seven hours. See Table 1.

Collection of data via electronic survey administered to all 55 counties revealed the following:

- Delivery of art and music at the elementary level is extremely inconsistent in regard to both allotted time and the endorsements of those teaching these subjects.
- There are 484 schools housing grades K-5 in West Virginia. Of these:
 - 88.6% (429 schools) provide music instruction from teachers possessing a music endorsement. Recent data released from NCES (2011) indicates that 91% of elementary schools nationwide receive instruction from an “arts specialist” in music.
 - 63.8% (309 schools) provide art instruction from teachers possessing an art endorsement, compared to the national average of 84%.¹
 - 48 schools leave both art and music to the regular classroom teacher.
 - See Table 2.
- Regarding time allotted for instruction:
 - In both art and music, most schools provide between 30 and 89 minutes of instruction per week.
 - 25 schools provide 0 minutes of art instruction; another 79 provide fewer than 30 minutes.
 - 8 schools provide 0 minutes of music instruction; another 17 provide fewer than 30 minutes.
 - While Policy 2510 does allow for the integration of these content areas in grades K-2, it is unclear whether this is even permissible in grades 3-5.
 - See Table 3.

Were the WVDE to require that all schools hire art and music teachers *immediately*, this *could* create additional problems. WVEIS data indicate that there is a relatively small pool of certified teachers in art and music who could fill any additional positions. 154 individuals under the age of 55 possess art endorsements who are not currently employed in West Virginia schools. 409 individuals under the age of 55 possess music endorsements who are not currently employed in West Virginia schools. (*These*

¹ Parsad, B., & Coopersmith, J. (2011). *A snapshot of arts education in public elementary and secondary schools: 2009-10*. National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011078.pdf>.

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numbers would obviously rise without the age constraint, though it seems unlikely that a large number of individuals would begin a teaching career after this age. WVEIS data also does not account for anyone who is deceased, has moved from the state or is employed in another field.)

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Art and music should be taught by teachers possessing those endorsements whenever feasible. The considerable mastery of content that is requisite to simply *enter* an art or music education program at a college or university, coupled with the extensive professional preparation that these teachers receive, make them significantly more qualified to teach in these core content areas than other teachers.
2. Given the probability that West Virginia does not currently have enough teachers with these endorsements to staff every elementary school, the following two options are recommended:
 - 1) Encourage districts that are unable to hire teachers with art or music endorsements to hire professionals who possess degrees in these content areas on temporary permit, using Title II funds to pay for these individuals to complete degree programs in education that would lead to certification and the appropriate endorsement.
 - 2) Alternatively, the WVDE should create advanced credentials for elementary teachers in both art and music, and require that all schools that have demonstrated that they are unable to hire teachers with these endorsements provide instruction to students from professionals who have earned the appropriate advanced credential.
 - These advanced credentials could include a bundle of courses delivered on the WVDE e-Learning platform as a cost-effective way to prepare teachers. Each advanced credential should also include a performance assessment evaluated by arts professionals demonstrating mastery of the appropriate content, such as a portfolio for the art credential and a juried performance in music.
 - Due to the significant rigor of Content Standards and Objectives in the upper grades, this advanced credential *would not be appropriate* for teacher preparation in art or music past the elementary level.
3. Schools should work to ensure that sufficient time is provided for mastery of the Content Standards and Objectives. While Policy 2510 is not prescriptive regarding time allotted for instruction in these areas, it does say that “sufficient emphasis must be placed on the given content areas to ensure that students master content knowledge and skills as specified in the 21st century content standards and objectives for each subject.” It is the opinion of this group that the majority of the schools surveyed do not allot sufficient time for such mastery.