

Dear Board:

This is my twentieth year teaching art in Vermont, the first eighteen at the high school level and last year and this teaching 3rd-8th grade. I was a Vermont Teacher of the Year finalist in 2023 and had the pleasure of meeting you (via the screen) and presenting to you about the importance of choice in education. I have been reviewing the most recent changes you are proposing to the EQS and have a couple of points of concern to raise during the public comment period. I am writing on my own behalf, and not representing my school or district.

Having experienced teaching students at many grade level bands, I can tell you that the arts are truly essential to opening up kids to new possibilities and seeing themselves as creative contributors to the 21st century. Arts provide opportunities for students to value themselves, as well as to see into the lives and experiences of others. I do believe that, like PE or Library, there should be a minimum requirement for students in our system for experiencing the Arts.

Section 2120.5 Curriculum Content, the Arts are grouped in a large section (d) under global citizenship (including the concepts of civics, economics, geography, world language, the arts and cultural studies, and history). It is my opinion that the arts should have their own section like Physical Education and Health, and suggest that students grades K-8 experience a minimum of one performing and one visual arts class per week for the entire school year (or the equivalent), and that our grades 9-12 students should have at least one year (or equivalent) of performing or visual arts during their high school career.

Additionally, getting to know the experiences of teachers in different age bands from around the state, I am realizing that many of my colleagues are overwhelmed with the number of students they are serving without appropriate time/compensation. It would be ideal if schools with 300 or more students had full-time Arts teachers so that they can meet the needs of their students appropriately.

Sincerely,

Abbie Bowker, M. Ed.  
Rowland Fellow  
Vermont Art Educator  
VAEA/NAEA Member

**Pronouns:** She/Her/Hers ([Why include pronouns?](#))