

Dear Jennifer Deck Samuelson and Members of the Vermont State Board of Education,

Attached is a letter from the Vermont Art Educators Association calling urgently for support and clarity in The Arts under the Education Quality Standards. We respectfully request your review and consideration for greater equity for our students.

Thank you,  
Kim Desjardins

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Jennifer Deck Samuelson

Chair of the Vermont Board of Education

Manchester Center, VT 05255

Subject: Urgent Call for Support and Clarity in Arts under the Education Quality Standards

Dear Jennifer Deck Samuelson and Members of the Board of Education,

We are respectfully writing to you on behalf of the Vermont Art Educator Association to express our deep concerns regarding the recent addition of the word "art" under Section 2120.5 Curriculum Content, specifically in the context of global citizenship. We believe that this addition has the potential to significantly impact the future of arts education in Vermont schools.

Allow us to provide you with an overview of the current state of arts education in many Vermont schools. Under the existing language of the Education Quality Standards, arts educators, encompassing music, theater, dance, and visual arts, are subjected to teaching loads as determined by their respective school districts. In some instances, such as in the Champlain Valley School District, language has been introduced into contracts that support "teaching minutes," permitting arts educators to teach up to 34 classes a week. This staggering workload is unsustainable and has led to numerous open positions in the field of art education going unfilled across the state.

While Vermont proudly champions the arts, we must acknowledge that we do not afford arts educators the same considerations as their peers in other subjects. They are often burdened with excessive student numbers and classes, causing burnout and high turnover rates. We believe that it is imperative to address this issue and seek your support in bringing equity and clarity to arts education in our state.

Our primary concern with adding the arts to the global citizenship framework is the lack of clarity and potential adverse effects on arts education. Will arts educators be expected to incorporate

art history into an already demanding curriculum? Could this addition be used as a justification to further reduce arts positions, with the assumption that students can fulfill their arts requirements through global citizenship courses? These uncertainties demand your immediate attention and action.

The arts are not mere extracurricular activities; they are vital for the well-being and development of our students. We applaud the well-outlined requirements for physical education and health education, and we believe that the same commitment should be extended to the arts, which are equally essential for many students.

Therefore, we implore you not to merely add the word "arts" to global citizenship and consider the matter resolved. Instead, we urge you to seize this opportunity to demonstrate unwavering support for arts education in Vermont's public schools by explicitly outlining equitable arts education standards for all students.

Our proposed change is as follows:

Under Section 2120.5 Curriculum Content, we recommend that "the arts" be removed from global citizenship and placed under Section 2120.5f, which should be articulated as follows:

f) Artistic Expression (including visual, media, and performing arts):

- Provide students in grades K-8 with a minimum of 1 performing arts and 1 visual arts class per week for the entire school year.
- Provide students in grades 9-12 with a minimum of 1 performing arts and 1 visual arts class during their high school career.

Additionally, we propose an amendment to Section 2121.2 Staff, which currently states:

"Classes in grades K-3, when taken together, shall average fewer than 20 students per teacher. In grades 4-12, when taken together, classes shall average fewer than 25 students per teacher. The total class roll of a teacher shall not exceed 100 students, except where the specific nature of the teacher's assignment (such as in certain art, music, or physical education programs) is plainly adaptable to the teaching of greater numbers of students while meeting the educational goals of the program."

We recommend revising it to read:

"Classes in grades K-3, when taken together, shall average fewer than 20 students per teacher. In grades 4-12, when taken together, classes shall average fewer than 25 students per teacher. The total class roll of a teacher shall not exceed 100 students, except in cases where the specific nature of the teacher's assignment (such as in certain art, music, or physical education programs) requires. In these cases, the total number of teacher's classes will not exceed 30 classes a week at the elementary school level, and equivalent time at the middle and high school levels"

We firmly believe that these changes will help create more equitable opportunities for students in Vermont and ensure the long-term viability of successful arts programs in our schools.

In conclusion, we respectfully request your support in addressing the concerns raised by the Vermont Art Educator Association and implementing these changes. By doing so, you will not only demonstrate your commitment to the arts but also help foster a well-rounded and enriched educational experience for all students in our state.

We appreciate your time and attention to this matter and eagerly await your response and action on behalf of the future of arts education in Vermont.

Sincerely,

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