

Arts Education

The Arts Education Working Group reviewed Goal Four of Arts Plan NJ, drafting new objectives to address current conditions, needs, and opportunities. This report recognizes and reflects the significant progress in arts education made at the state policy level, especially in the formal adoption of the Core Curriculum Content Standards in the Arts. The Working Group, which was representative of New Jersey's arts and education communities, recognized that school-based tools in arts education could also inform and improve lifelong learning in the arts. The value of collaboration, communication and sharing of expertise and arts resources among educators and other communities was the common thread woven through the Working Group's discussions. A regular forum to continue these conversations and a central resource organization for the arts and arts education in New Jersey will be essential to the ongoing health of arts education in the state.

The Goal: *To make high quality arts education available to all New Jerseyans.*

The Top Five Objectives

1. Ensure that the visual and performing arts standards are taught as part of the core curriculum; are infused into other content areas; and are assessed, monitored, and funded as part of a complete education in preK-12 public schools. Encourage and support the integration of the visual and performing arts in preK-12 private schools as well.
2. Improve the rigor and quality of visual and performing arts programs by: identifying best practice standards and encouraging schools and arts organizations to implement them; establishing a central resource that consolidates research, advocacy strategies and best practices, and that links arts education resources throughout New Jersey; and connecting community-based resources (including artists and arts organizations) to educational institutions for potential participation in arts education curricula and programs.
3. Document and promote the educational benefits and impact of the arts, specifically the contribution they make to student achievement, work skills, individual fulfillment, a stimulating learning environment and a civilized, sustainable society.

4. Develop support structures, policies and incentives for all regions of the state that emphasize the lifelong learning value of the arts from early childhood on, and that lead to high quality arts education programs and services for people of all ages and abilities.
5. Create and strengthen partnerships involving higher education, preK-12, arts communities, and state and local agencies to renew and expand higher education programs that offer standards-based training for educators, arts educators, artists and teaching artists.

Achieving These Objectives

The Arts Education Working Group suggested numerous strategies to address these objectives, virtually all of which require collaboration through coalition-building, liaising, hosting, or partnering and sharing responsibility. To nurture an environment where such relationships can flourish, it will be crucial to report on and discuss the Arts Plan widely – not only the purpose of the *new* Arts Plan but also the successes, outcomes, and impact of the *previous* Arts Plan. Such understanding is the fertile ground in which to seed buy-in, investment, and participation going forward.

The Working Group pointed to major progress on a number of fronts: the Core Curriculum Content Standards in the Visual and Performing Arts have now been formally adopted as a mandate; high school graduation requirements now include a credit requirement in the arts; for the first time the state has defined the arts as dance, music, theatre and visual arts; the state has identified specific licensing requirements in each of the arts disciplines; there are professional development requirements for both teachers and administrators in all of the core curriculum content areas. All of this, the Working Group noted, represents a big change from when the last Arts Plan was developed.