



North Carolina Music Educators Association
Associated with the State Department of Public Instruction and
A Federated State Association of NAfME: The National Association for Music Education



NCMEA RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES IN RESPONSE TO THE WESTED REPORT IN *LEANDRO*

The North Carolina Music Educators Association (NCMEA) fully supports the recommendations on the Sound Basic Education Plan designed by WestEd.

NCMEA is firmly committed to the research driven belief that music has a demonstrable positive impact on learning; enabling better education; creating a more positive school climate; and keeping students engaged. Music benefits North Carolina and our nation beyond school by making better employees, better citizens and teaches cooperation, discipline, creativity, and innovation—just what we need for today's 21st century learners.

Further, we believe the recommendations in the WestEd report - for North Carolina's students to receive a sound basic education - are the right step in creating an accessible and equitable education; however, we also support the essential need for today's students to be well-rounded through a core education that includes music and the arts. By partnering with guiding language in policy that supports the recognition of music and the arts as a core subject defined in the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, North Carolina's children may also graduate with a rigorous, relevant, and real-world education prepared for their future no matter what it may hold.

Critical Need: Provide a qualified, well-prepared, and diverse teaching staff in every school.

Increase the pipeline of diverse, well-prepared teachers who enter through high-retention pathways and meet the needs of the state's public schools. It was noted that North Carolina-trained teachers have the highest levels of effectiveness and retention of any major pathway in the state. North Carolina has excellent music education degree programs in the UNC System as well as many private colleges and universities in the State.

Develop a system to ensure that all North Carolina teachers have the opportunities they need for continued professional learning to improve and update their knowledge and practices. The State Board of Education can look to NCMEA and the other arts education professional associations (Visual Arts, Theatre and Dance) that already provide annual professional development conferences in our disciplines. NCMEA holds a 3 ½ day in-service conference attended by more than 1,500 K-12 music educators, college students and higher ed faculty in Winston-Salem each November. At our Conference, and with student-events throughout the year, we bring in nationally recognized, regional and NC presenters that provide over 200 clinics and sessions in band, jazz, choral and orchestra education. In partnership with NCDPI our conference attendees can earn up to 20 hours of CEU credits for state licensure and National Board Certification.

Funding for professional development has decreased in recent years so increased funding is essential. Arts education professional associations are providing high-quality professional development a very reasonable cost.

Provide high-quality comprehensive mentoring and induction support for novice teachers in their first three years of teaching to increase both their effectiveness and their retention. As stated above, the State Board of Education can look to NCMEA and the other arts education professional associations as partners in mentor programs. NCMEA's Mentor Program develops teams that consist of the new teacher, a second- or third-year teacher, and a veteran teacher. We schedule a mentor retreat at the annual professional development conference and sub pay for mentor, mentee visits throughout the school year.

Critical Need: Direct resources, opportunities, and initiatives to economically disadvantaged students. NCMEA members consistently share with our leadership issues they feel contribute to disparity of access to music education within the state, particularly in low income and Title I schools/areas. While one county may offer a variety of music education options from grades K-12, a neighboring county offers music to only secondary students or, in the worst cases, music programs have been cut entirely. As affirmed in the WestEd report, NCMEA wholeheartedly agrees that music education is "of great value for students, helping prepare them for college, careers, and civic life and helping them acquire digital-age skills in the areas of critical problem solving, communications, collaboration, and creative thinking" (p. 100). The lack of music education in poor counties and schools is unacceptable, considering the well-researched benefits of music study to young people.

In addition to music and the arts being a part of a well-rounded education as defined in ESSA, recent research draws significant connections to music and the arts and a student's ability to confront social and emotional challenges, many of which are magnified by the status of residing in a low-income family. Through music and arts instruction in our schools, schools can cultivate a nurturing, participatory, and equitable experience that will support the social and emotional needs of these low-income learners. Recent research supports that for SEL skills to be most effective they need to be embedded into the curriculum. We believe that these skills are more authentically experienced for our students through arts education experiences. Specifically, these programs will underscore three SEL embedded techniques advocated by Dr. Scott Edgar; group self-reflection, emotional vocabulary building, and reflection with SEL prompts.

NCMEA continues to advocate for a North Carolina high school graduation requirement which includes a unit of credit in an arts education course. If passed by the General Assembly, this legislation will direct the State Board of Education to modify the state's graduation requirements to include at least one unit of required credit to be completed in an arts education course at any time between grades six through twelve. Music and the arts are often eliminated to fund other aspects of education – especially in economically disadvantaged school districts. The passage of

this legislation will help eliminate the disparity of access to a well-rounded education, providing all North Carolina students the enriching intellectual advantages offered only by participation in the arts regardless of socioeconomic status or geographical location.

Critical Need: Revise the student assessment system and school accountability system.

The accountability system does not take critical factors into account when determining which schools are identified as being among the lowest-performing schools in need of state-provided interventions and supports. NCMEA appreciates that music and art education is incorporated into the school report cards.

Revising the student assessment system and school accountability system; Accountability is important. However, when test results from a few subjects are overemphasized in measuring the success of a school, a message is communicated: non-tested subjects are not necessary to the growth and education of North Carolina students.

Because much publicity is given to tested subjects, legislators and administrators allocate significant resources to only these subjects. If the value of educating the whole child is important, policy and guiding language must be in place by the State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction that recognizes all elements that are a part of educating each child to their full potential.

Research has continually shown that a school's overall quality is influenced by the inclusion of arts education programs. For this reason, NCMEA feels that more weight should be given to arts programs when determining the "grade" of a school.

Summary

NCMEA believes the recommendations in the WestEd report for North Carolina's students to receive a sound basic education are the right step in creating an accessible and equitable education; however, we also support the essential need for today's students to be well-rounded through a core education that includes music and the arts. By issuing guiding language that supports the furtherance and addition of music and arts education courses in all North Carolina's schools, it will be clearer to districts and education leaders that equity for all students also means equity for all opportunities in their educational experience.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pat Hall
Executive Director
North Carolina Music Educators Association