

THE FOLLOWING INCLUDES BACKGROUND, CONTEXTUAL and EVIDENCE STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF H-7020: Transparency in Arts Education Access and Proficiency Act (TAAPA)

This material is provided to the House Education Committee members by the Rhode Island Music Education Association Advocacy Task Force members. Note that much of the data about current RI arts education participation comes from the RHODE ISLAND ARTS EDUCATION DATA DASHBOARD <https://arts.ri.gov/programs/arts-education/ri-arts-education-data-dashboard>

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Transparency in Arts Education Access and Proficiency Act (TAAPA)

INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND, and CONTEXT

The Importance of the Arts The arts are a distinctive vehicle to discover who we are and share our identity and viewpoint with the world. They have shaped every culture on earth, and every individual has experienced the joy and impact of connecting to themselves and others through diverse art forms. The arts require humans to synthesize various ways of thinking, applying mathematical, scientific, linguistic, cultural, and social skills in authentic creative endeavors. By providing equitable access to high-quality arts education for Rhode Island students, we celebrate their unique creative perspectives, support their daily well-being, and promote the development of well-rounded learners.

An ever-growing body of research has established that:

- Every human being is capable of becoming proficient in one or more of the Arts
- Arts education prepares students for success in college and beyond.
- Arts education supports effective instruction and engagement, even beyond the walls of the arts classroom.
- Arts education improves school climate and culture and supports community engagement.
- The Arts are not only for the “gifted and talented.” All human beings can find meaning, connection, joy and increased social-emotional well-being, through involvement and immersion in one or more of the Arts from birth through adulthood and beyond.

Federally: The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA, 2015) recognizes the place of the arts and music within a well-rounded education. At the state level, high-quality arts education supports Rhode Island’s *Vision for Student Success* by providing opportunities for students to “think critically and collaboratively, and act as a creative, self-motivated, culturally and globally competent learner.” Students who are proficient in at least one art form after sequential PK-8 arts instruction and complete at least one high school arts credit will be better “prepared to lead

fulfilling and productive lives, succeed in academic and employment settings, and contribute meaningfully to society.”

Locally: Rhode Island’s **Basic Education Plan** and the recently revised **High School Graduation Requirements** reaffirm that every student graduating from high school in Rhode Island must be proficient in at least one of the Arts. This Arts Proficiency requirement for all students has the potential to make Rhode Island one of the nation’s leaders in creating a community of dynamic, creative, enlightened, responsible, empathetic, knowledgeable and happy citizens.

Economically: Arts education can lead directly to real-world careers in the Arts and Cultural sector, which in 2021 made up over 4.4% of the nations’ GDP, **including over \$2 billion and almost 18,000 jobs in Rhode Island alone.**

RESEARCH BASED and FACTUAL EVIDENCE:

For the purposes of this Act, “ARTS” refers specifically to Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theater and Visual Arts

- (1) All Rhode Island students are currently required to become proficient in one of the Arts before they graduate from high school, as declared in the state Basic Education Plan and High School Graduation requirements. This regulation has been in place for over 20 years.
- (2) Current RIDE regulations indicate that Rhode Island’s Arts Proficiency is aligned with the proficiency descriptors in the National Core Arts Standards, which the RI Council on Elementary and Secondary Education adopted as the official required Arts Curriculum Standards for the state.
- (3) While almost all Rhode Island schools include some instruction in the Arts, there is a wide disparity in terms of percentage of students enrolled, variety of Arts genres and courses offered, and actual accessibility of these courses due to scheduling systems and other school curricula mandates. In fact currently 30% of RI’s schools do not provide access to even the minimum Arts access established by the BEP
- (4) There is currently a wide disparity in school districts’ interpretation and implementation of the current Arts Proficiency requirement, and the accessibility and variety of courses available for students to achieve proficiency, as defined in the National Core Arts Standards. In most if not all high schools, as long as a student takes any “arts” course for at least ½ credit, they are checked off as “Proficient.” This includes students who have had minimal if any substantive arts instruction since 5th grade. The NCAS standards that RI has adopted as its Arts Curriculum model, show that it is

impossible to attain proficiency with only a single HS Arts Course.

<https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/>

- (5) There is currently no proactive, easily accessible, measurable, and transparent way for parents, students and communities to compare and contrast the level of availability, accessibility and level of student engagement in the Arts for all students from school to school. This lack of transparency increases the difficulty in addressing the inequity in Arts education opportunities for students based on free/reduced-price-lunch rates throughout the state. **In 2021-22, over 40% of schools with high rates of FRPL did not meet the minimum arts requirements (BEP) and 18% of those schools provided NO arts access at all.**
- (6) Without a comprehensive standards-based arts curriculum in place for all students in grades PreK-8, it is nearly impossible for students to meet the high school level of proficiency in any of the Arts merely by taking a single course in high school.
- (7) Inequity in Arts Education in Rhode Island is largely hidden from public knowledge and attention since there is no mandated reporting regarding Arts Education in Rhode Island. This makes it challenging if not impossible for parents to clearly understand what should be available to their children as compared to what is actually available, in terms of Arts Education, in their own schools.
- (8) The lack of transparency and inequity is further exacerbated due to the high degree of focus on the other core subjects, with the Arts not even mentioned in most if not all formal accountability and reporting out tools used by RIDE, including the annual School Report Cards.
- (9) Studies have shown that offering more music and arts is associated with lower chronic absenteeism rates and higher overall school-day attendance rates.
<https://www.nammfoundation.org/articles/2021-10-15/music-and-arts-may-reduce-chronic-absenteeism>
- (10) Without equity in Arts Education, there is a lack of equity in overall education for all students in Rhode Island.
- (11) Shining a spotlight on the current state of Arts Education in all schools will raise the level of the importance of Arts Education as a core subject for all students to achieve proficiency in and better enable schools and communities to address inequities and deficiencies that may come to light.
- (12) As such it is in the best interests of the people of the state of Rhode Island to enact the Rhode Island TRANSPARENCY IN ARTS EDUCATION ACCESS AND PROFICIENCY ACT that will require an annual report on each middle school and high schools' yearly enrollment in Arts-Curriculum-Based Courses that support all students becoming proficient in one of the arts by graduation, provide a sampling of actual student work demonstrating Arts

Proficiency by Graduation, and provide an arts dedicated staff person at RIDE to coordinate and support these initiatives.

PURPOSE of the ACTUAL ACT

The purpose of the TRANSPARENCY IN ARTS EDUCATION ACCESS AND PROFICIENCY ACT is to ensure each middle and high school reports annually on the availability of, and percentage of students enrolled in, Arts Education Courses, that would enable all students to achieve high school level proficiency in one of the Arts by graduation. The RIDE annual school report card is to be the reporting method used. The specifics of the actual reporting methodology and data will be developed by RIDE with implementation by the 2025-26 academic school year.

In addition, this Act directs that by the 2026-27 academic school year, RIDE will ask each school to provide evidence that their arts education programs are enabling students to achieve Arts Proficiency, as defined by the National Core Arts Standards, by submitting portfolios of Arts works developed primarily through and within their educational programs, by selected high school graduates.

Finally, this Act would ensure that RIDE continues to employ a qualified staff member to serve in the role of Arts Education Curriculum Coordinator at the same leadership level as RIDE's other content coordinators. The current Arts Education Coordinator on staff was recently hired and is doing outstanding work already on ensuring there is a voice "at the table" in the RIDE offices focused on the Arts Education needs and requirements for all students. Unfortunately the current Arts Coordinator position, which took years of asking to have RIDE put in place, is funded through *ESSA* funding scheduled to expire in September 2024 and RIDE has not indicated it plans to renew/retain the position. A primary function of this coordinator is to support school districts in meeting the Arts Education curricular and reporting requirements, including those outlined in this act, along with any other arts education related tasks within RIDE.

PROPOSED REGULATION

Transparency in Arts Education Access and Proficiency Act

By the 2025-26 academic school year, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) will include, on the each school's annual School Report Card (<https://reportcard.ride.ri.gov/>), each school's percentage of students enrolled in Arts Education Courses, as defined by the National Core Arts Standards, along with the number of courses available to students in each Arts area, specifically Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theater, and Visual Arts.

By the 2026-27 academic school year, RIDE will require each high school to provide annually a representative sample of graduated **students' work** that show evidence of meeting proficiency in one of the Arts, as defined by the National Core Arts Standards. The student work presented must include evidence of works developed via courses within the regular school day.

By the 2025-26 budget year, RIDE will employ a qualified staff member to serve in the role of Arts Education Curriculum Coordinator at the same leadership level as RIDE's other content coordinators. A primary function of this coordinator is to support school districts in meeting the Arts Education curricular and reporting requirements, as outlined in this act, along with any other arts education related tasks within RIDE.

IF PASSED: Year 1—tell schools; Year 2 collect data; Year 3 – publish data and Collect Portfolios.
(2024-25) (2025-26) (Fall 2026) (June 2026)

Lisa Cataldi

From: David Neves <dn8095773@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2024 12:20 PM
To: House Education Committee
Cc: Rep. Brien, Jon D.; Karen Anghinetti
Subject: H 7020 - Arts education
Attachments: H-7020 Transparency in Arts...Background-Context-Evidence.docx

Dear House Education Committee,

My name is David Neves, and I am writing in support of H-7020 TRANSPARENCY IN ARTS EDUCATION ACCESS AND PROFICIENCY ACT.

As the Advocacy Co-Chair of the Rhode Island Music Education Association, I am hoping to testify at this Wednesday's hearing in support of this bill, but

I also wanted to send you the attachment below to enter into written support of the bill. The attachment includes background, context, and research based evidence statements that the RIMEA advocacy team and other arts education advocates in our state used in determining the particular requests contained in this bill..

I look forward to seeing all of you on Wednesday and thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

David Neves

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"Music is a more potent instrument than any other for education because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul" — Plato

"Don't let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do." — John Wooden

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