

MEMORANDUM

TO: Arlington School Board (with review by ACI)

FROM: Arts Advisory Committee

DATE: December 23, 2014

SUBJECT: Non-recommending Year Report

The Arts Advisory Committee focuses on arts education in Arlington Public Schools, including instrumental and vocal music, visual arts, and theater arts Pre-K through 12th grade. The committee meets monthly.

Our Committee is researching, following and gathering data and information as needed to monitor these issues (not listed in any order) in 2014-2015. We will:

1. Monitor varying effects on “equity” in art program provision across PreK-12 programs at all APS schools and make information/spending levels more transparent to parents/public – for examples see recommendation 2 and 3 below regarding varying funding levels for visual arts supplies in different secondary schools and varying access by secondary school choral instructors to piano accompanists for performances/competitions.
2. Monitor effects of this year’s 50% cut in field trip budget on arts programs.
3. Monitor any negative impacts on Pre-K-12 students’ art/performing art instruction access as a result of new or ongoing APS initiatives such as the implementation of ITSS, gifted student pull outs and additional remediation classes.
4. Similarly, investigate the possibility of a planning factor change for instrumental music instruction in APS 4th and 5th grades. Currently, enrollment increases are not tied to teacher numbers in these programs in elementary schools across APS.
5. Given budget limitations, identify and document revenue neutral best practices in arts instruction/programs in Arlington and across our area.
6. Investigate/document any best practices that allow flexible graduation options to ensure arts high school students retain 4 years’ access to their art classes - examples – options to use PE in summer school or having marching band (a credited course) to fulfill VA PE requirement.
7. To ensure high school arts students retain access to four years of their secondary arts electives and access to a variety of arts choices (being in band and choir in the same year for example) – evaluate existing high school scheduling and counseling practices with goal to improve arts elective access and 4-year class consistency to best develop arts

students/prepare them for college audition/portfolio demonstration.

8. Investigate and document how secondary school, Program of Studies arts course access may not be equitable across APS and consider best practice options to increase access while focusing on revenue neutral options. Example – AP Music Theory is not consistently offered at each APS high school each year. Jazz is not universally offered as an academic class.
9. Monitor and document improved procedures and opportunities to ensure APS gifted arts students are properly identified and served through 5th-12th grade.

Update of Previous Recommendations:

Recommendation #1: Ensure that Joint Use Facilities are accessible first for instruction.

Rationale: Original MOUs for joint use facilities should be reviewed and modified to align with best instructional practices currently needed to support APS instruction and thriving performing arts programs. These practices should also be consistent across the county.

It is vital that APS monitor the actual implementation of a Joint Use Agreement and ensure that it supports instruction first to include student and teacher access. The arts spaces including the auditoriums should be available to students and teachers throughout the school day and after as scheduled for rehearsals and performances. Performing arts teachers should have keys to the auditorium. When the county use requires sets to be onstage for productions, they should strike these sets after a weekend performance so that the stage is available during the school day.

Status: Still in process. Arlington County staff and APS staff will continue a dialogue to evaluate any needed change to the current joint use agreement. TJMS and Gunston Middle School are the Joint Use facilities. Recently, given increased student enrollment, stage use as a daily classroom has begun in one instance – underscoring the need for updated agreement language to better protect use for instruction. Arts Advisory Committee will monitor.

2011 – 2017 Strategic Plan Alignment: Aligns particularly with Strategic Goal #4 (Provide Optimal Learning Environments), but supports all five goals. By ensuring access for students to arts spaces that are jointly used by APS and the County, every student is challenged and engaged to the maximum extent possible (#1).

Budgetary Implications: Several hours of APS staff time to review Joint Use Facilities and discuss policies and scheduling with County staff.

ACI vote: 25-0-0

Recommendation #2: Establish line item funding for Visual Arts supplies that is consistent for all secondary schools.

Rationale: APS provides a consistent budget for Visual Arts supplies in elementary schools, but not for secondary schools. Currently there is a wide gap between monies supplied between one secondary school to another.

Status: Funding was not included in this year's APS budget to establish a consistent, line-item funding level for visual arts supplies at all secondary schools. Some middle/high schools spend \$4 per student for visual art supplies versus \$11 per student at other APS schools. In past years, note that the APS School Board established a consistent, line-item funding level for visual arts supplies at the K-5 level.

2011-17 Strategic Plan Alignment: Aligns particularly with Strategic Goals #1 (Ensure That Every Student is Challenged and Engaged) and #4 (Provide Optimal Learning Environments), but by systematizing Visual Arts education across schools, it would also reduce achievement gaps in Arts (#2).

Budgetary Implications: Based on last year's projections, it was recommended that \$9.10 per student enrolled be allocated for MS art funding. It was recommended that the \$9.10 be redirected from FY14 MS Instructional supplies *having a \$0 impact* on budget. It is recommended that \$11.10 per student enrolled be allocated for HS arts funding. Budget impact for this would be \$66,600 (\$11.10 for approximately 6000 HS students.) Due to the amount of consumables and cost of art supplies for secondary programs this is slightly higher than the \$8.20 planning factor assigned per student for Science supplies.

ACI vote: 23-1-1

Recommendation #3: Provide stipend funding for accompanists for all school productions, particularly for secondary choral programs.

Rationale: The accompanist is a necessary and valuable component of the middle school and high school choral music curriculum. At a minimum the accompanist should be available to the teacher and chorus for rehearsals and concerts. Ideally the accompanist should also be available during class time when music teachers are providing instruction on such curriculum items as how to incorporate various singing techniques, on how to respond to conducting patterns and interpretive gestures, and on how to evaluate performances.

According to a recent survey of APS choral music teachers, there is a wide gap in the resources available to compensate accompanists and, consequently, a wide gap in the amount of time that the teachers have access to accompanists. Middle and high school music teachers currently compensate the accompanists using funds from booster organizations, PTA grants, fundraisers and donations. At the elementary level, choral music teachers often depend on volunteers or colleagues to provide accompaniment. Because there is currently no uniform system for providing accompanists, several new teachers reported that they had no idea what to do about accompanists.

Status: Funding was not included in this year's APS budget and there is currently no uniform system for providing accompanists to K-5 music teachers or MS/HS choral instructors – currently leading academic classes with a grade. Last year's Arts Committee survey of arts/performing arts teachers

identified a wide gap in the resources available to compensate accompanists and, consequently, a wide gap in the amount of time that the teachers have access to accompanists. At a minimum the accompanist should be available to the teacher and chorus for key rehearsals allowing the director to focus on fine tuning singing techniques and singer response to conducting patterns/ interpretive gestures. Middle and high school music teachers currently compensate the accompanists using funds from booster organizations, PTA grants, fundraisers and donations – these amounts vary widely between secondary schools.

2011-17 Strategic Plan Alignment: Aligns particularly with Strategic Goals #1 (Ensure That Every Student is Challenged and Engaged) and #4 (Provide Optimal Learning Environments), but by systematizing Music education across schools, it would also reduce achievement gaps in Arts (#2). By providing consistent support to Music teachers, it also supports Strategic Goal #3 (Recruit, Retain, and Develop High-Quality Staff).

Budget Implications: Funding for accompanists for high schools and middle schools - 25 hours per quarter at \$60.00 per hour for 9 schools = \$54,000. Funding for accompanists for elementary schools - 40 hours per year at \$60.00 per hour for 22 schools = \$52,800

ACI Vote: 15-5-5

Arts Advisory Committee members 2014-2015

Co-chairs: Susan Scott and Hannah Eun

Members: Chris Ditta, Karen Dunlap (member observer), Pam Farrell (Arts Education Supervisor and liaison to the Arts Advisory Committee.) Potential members include: Courtney Hill and Caren Lewis