

MEMORANDUM

TO: Arlington School Board

FROM: Arts Advisory Committee

DATE: December 15, 2010

SUBJECT: Non-recommending Year Report

Current Year Activities:

The Arts Advisory Committee represents the interests of arts education in the areas of instrumental and vocal music, visual arts, and theater arts. The Committee meets monthly on Wednesday evenings at the Syphax Academic Center.

The Arts Advisory Committee continues its advocacy for arts education in Arlington Public Schools. The committee's current activities include the following actions:

- 1) We are requesting information about the APS response to the Fisher Theatrical report. This report was prepared last school year to assess safety in APS theater facilities and provide suggestions for improvements.
- 2) We are reviewing the Arts Evaluation Report that was presented to the School Board by Arts Supervisor, Pam Farrell, in the fall of 2010.
- 3) We are continuing to monitor vocal music programs in APS middle and high schools. This committee remains very concerned about the 42% decrease in choral arts enrollment in APS at the middle school level (grades 7-8) from 2006-2010.
- 4) We are studying the implementation and impact of Act II programs in APS Middle Schools. Dr. Mark Johnson met with our committee to address committee members' questions about the funding of ACT II programs, the number and type of arts courses being offered, and the decision-making process involved in selecting and publicizing the ACT II courses.
- 5) We are concerned about the impact that the Virginia DOE Personal Finance credit requirement will have on arts enrollment. High school students will have to give up an elective course (possibly arts) in order to meet this requirement. We will monitor the impact of this new graduation requirement as it is implemented beginning in the 2011-2012 school year.

- 6) Other issues that we may discuss during the coming year include:
- The Middle School Design proposal and its impact on arts education;
 - The lack of opportunities for young elementary school students to participate in instrumental music classes (currently limited to grades 4 and 5);
 - Proposed changes to the Program of Studies (Fine Arts);
 - The under-representation of Hispanic and African American students enrolled in secondary arts courses, as well as the increasing (arts enrollment) gap between white and other student groups at the middle school level.
- 7) The committee has invited APS fine arts staff and students to discuss their experiences with arts education in Arlington schools.

Update of Previous Recommendations:

In 2010 this committee made two recommendations:

1) **Hire a Theater Technology Specialist** *to ensure the continued safety of students, staff and the community; to oversee the maintenance and repair of performing arts facilities and equipment; and to train and guide theater tech students and teachers in proper, safe use of equipment.*

The Arts Education Supervisor continues to collaborate with Dave Roberts (APS Safety Specialist), Steve Larson (Risk Management Officer), and other APS managers regarding corrections to theater facilities and staff training. Many corrections and improvements have been made thus far. Training was provided to theater staff in November 2010; further training is planned. On November 1, a contractor was to begin work on theatre facilities at Williamsburg, Wakefield, and HB Woodlawn.

2) **Improve choral music education opportunities countywide**, *with a specific focus on middle schools in order to meet Strategic Plan achievement targets for arts and humanities that are not now being met and to close the growing achievement gap on this measure.*

The Arts Education office has requested funds (2011-12 APS budget) to provide stipends for a director and a manager of an All-County Middle School Chorus. The Arts Education Office is providing funding for the 2011 Choral Pyramid Concert, which will be held at Washington-Lee High School, as it was in January 2010. The Arts Office continues to provide support in other ways, including hiring new highly-qualified staff, providing professional development workshops, and hosting a Middle School Choral Festival.

Arts Advisory Committee members 2010-2011:

Christine DeRosa, co-chair
Lisa Koehler, co-chair

Robin Baxter, member
Chris Ditta, member
John Earle, member
Hanna Eun, member
James Kirchenbauer, member
Suzette Niess, member
Eileen Putman, member
Marissa Ramsey, student member
Cheryl Scott, member

Karen Dunlap, observer

Pam Farrell, Arts Supervisor
Lisa Sockett, ACI Vice-Chair

Appendix:

2010 Arts Advisory Committee Report with Recommendations / Staff Response:

http://www.apsva.us/1540108293848173/lib/1540108293848173/Staff_Response_-_Arts.pdf

2010 Arts Evaluation Report

[http://www.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/8AGPCS63DF9C/\\$file/D-4+Arts+Evaluation.pdf](http://www.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/8AGPCS63DF9C/$file/D-4+Arts+Evaluation.pdf)