



Talking Points for Washington State's ESSA Consolidated Plan Draft February 2017

Section One: Long Term Goals and Measurement of Interim Progress looks at three key areas for students: academic achievement, graduation rate, and English language proficiency, and identifies the goals and steps necessary to achieve those goals.

- We applaud OSPI's focus on closing achievement gaps between subgroups, rather than on school averages that may **mask** inequity among historically underserved student groups. This is critically important, and addressing systemic inequities will require much work. **We believe that the arts should be formally recognized as part of how OSPI assesses progress in our schools.** Learning in and through the arts has been shown to reduce achievement gaps between students from different backgrounds, students with special needs, and students who have experienced trauma, and can be an especially valuable tool for English Language Learners.
- **Arts education increases student and family engagement, which supports higher graduation rates.**
- One of ESSA's overall intentions is to give students a well-rounded education and give schools and educators flexibility to pursue academic goals in ways that meet the needs of their students. To further enhance the work on overall academic achievement, graduation rates, and English Language proficiency, **OSPI could include arts education data on the OSPI report card, and support arts-based performance tasks as an alternative assessment of learning goals in any/all subject areas.**

Section Two: Consultation and Coordination describes how OSPI and other stakeholders, including the public, worked together to develop the Plan.

- We recognize that OSPI is working to ensure that a wide range of voices is heard as this plan is defined and refined. **Arts educators would value the opportunity to join committees and provide input on how learning in and through the arts can support a variety of educational goals outlined in ESSA.**

Section Three: Challenging Academic Standards and Academic Assessments illustrates the state education standards in mathematics, English language arts, and other disciplines. It shows the assessment systems used in Washington State and explains how our students will be career and college-ready through application of the standards and assessment processes.

- Washington State has arts learning standards that provide important guidance to districts and schools on what all students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Washington also has OSPI-Developed Performance Assessments in dance, music, theatre, and visual arts that provide educators with a standard format for evaluating student progress in these arts disciplines. **The ESSA framework should include professional development for arts educators**

and K-6 generalists to help them learn to use the arts as a strategy for reaching high academic standards.

- While it's important to maintain focus on English Language Arts and Math, **it's also important that schools and districts continue to teach and assess learning in *all* core academic subjects, which includes the arts.** This supports a well-rounded education, and, when teachers are supported in opportunities to teach subjects in integrated and multi-disciplinary ways, it provides students multiple pathways for accessing knowledge. **The State ESSA plan could address learning standards, assessments, and support for interdisciplinary instruction across all core subject areas as a way to further support students and teachers.**

Section Four: Accountability, Support, and Improvement for Schools defines key thresholds for schools – in academic achievement, graduation rates, English language proficiency, school quality, and other measures. It outlines the support that will be provided to schools when necessary.

- Research indicates that schools rich in the arts promote an inclusive and positive school culture, and incorporating the arts into a strategic school improvement plan has an even greater impact as an intervention strategy for failing schools. Under the indicator called “School Quality or Student Success,” OSPI indicates that additional measures may be considered. **We recommend adding the measure “Arts Specialist FTEs per student” and/or “Hours per week of arts instruction per student.”**
- Research shows that high-quality, sequential arts education plays a positive role in both social and academic outcomes for students, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Arts learning increases student engagement, which in turn increases attendance – one of the measures already included in this area – and graduation rates. **Arts programs and programs that integrate the arts with other content areas address the opportunity gap and provide different avenues for learning and demonstrating understanding for all students.**
- We want the state plan to support implementing the arts as an intervention strategy. **Qualitative data from student, parent, and educator perception surveys could be used to assess the effectiveness of using arts interventions.**
- To ensure that all students not only have access to the arts, but are also receiving sequential, ongoing instruction in the arts, **quantitative data capturing the number of arts options available to students at the secondary level and the percentage of students enrolled in arts classes at the secondary level, as well as the average number of years students participate in sequential K-12 arts learning, should be gathered.**

Section Five: Supporting Excellent Educators defines what it takes to be an excellent educator and describes the professional development and other supports offered to educators in Washington State.

- **We recommend that OSPI continue in their efforts to retain and recruit qualified and certified arts teachers.**
- **Training elementary generalists to integrate the arts can increase teacher satisfaction and decrease teacher attrition rates.**
- Part of the strategy to retain and recruit excellent educators should include **encouraging districts to include the arts as an integral part of their strategic plan and vision, and providing opportunities for professional development in teaching and integrating the arts.**

Section Six: Supporting All Students describes how all students in our state will have access to a fair, equitable, and high-quality education. It addresses the academic and non-academic needs of subgroups of students, and how the state will collect and use data to ensure a well-rounded and supportive education for all students.

ESSA emphasizes the importance of providing “Well-Rounded Educational Opportunities” for all students. The arts are an essential part of this, and as stated in the ESSA legislation, the arts “support student engagement, problem solving, and conflict resolution.”

Opportunities in the arts can include

- **engaging the arts to improve students’ non-academic skills**, such as self-efficacy, perseverance, and growth mindset;
- supporting student attendance and other non-academic indicators through **increasing access and opportunities in the arts and other well-rounded educational subjects**;
- **expanding STEM to include arts integration**, further enhancing this program in that it too provides the relevancy and authentic learning opportunities that engage and challenge students;
- **providing an avenue for increasing family engagement in schools**;
- developing the 21st Century Skills of **creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking**; and
- **collecting data on the ratio of certified arts educators to students, and the number of high school students enrolled in arts courses year to year, to measure student access and quality in arts education.**

Conclusion

The arts can play a powerful role in improving teaching and learning. ArtsEd Washington appreciates the emphasis ESSA places on the arts in its definition of a well-rounded education, and its approach for teaching the “whole child”. The ESSA framework opens the door for arts education and arts integration as strategies in supporting school and student success, as well as being a core part of a well-rounded education.