

MASSACHUSETTS

AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS STATE POLICY PILOT PROGRAM – SP3

Massachusetts has been selected, after applying on a competitive basis, to be one of ten (10) pilot states to participate in Americans for the Arts' comprehensive national campaign to advance arts education, the [State Policy Pilot Program](#) (SP3).



Photos Courtesy of Arts|Learning

What drove the Massachusetts SP3 Team to apply to the pilot program were the ongoing inequities in access to a quality arts education facing students, parents and educators. Both funding formulas and education reform policies contributed to these inequities. In economically disadvantaged areas, relatively low school system funding could result in very limited availability of arts instruction. Even in a culturally rich urban area such as Boston, which has a high school arts education requirement, the requirement is often waived, and some high schools have no arts classes offered at all. The overarching emphasis on high stakes testing in English and mathematics has resulted in some schools redirecting resources from music and other arts classes to additional testing preparation. SP3 Team members noted incidents of students who struggled with English and math testing being denied the option of taking music and arts classes because those subjects were not perceived to contribute to testing preparation. Team members also observed that often the students who would benefit the most from arts learning were the least likely to have access to it. Additionally, they observed that principals, who are held accountable for annual testing improvement, could not expect support in making the case for the time, faculty, and materials devoted to a well-rounded education including the arts.

The Massachusetts SP3 Team will facilitate an action plan for the development and implementation of an arts education policy strategy for a 3-year period. Americans for the Arts will provide in-depth customized technical assistance and \$10,000 each year to assist New Jersey in successfully creating its plan and achieving its planned goals. To ensure that best practices will be developed, both in the state and nationally, the team will attend an annual symposium to share learning with other state teams, participate annually in a meeting of the State Arts Advocacy Network, and produce a final report, outlining what worked and did not work during participation in the pilot program. These final report/case studies will be turned into policy development tools for the field.

Led by Arts|Learning and MASSCreative and their "Arts for All" agenda, the Massachusetts SP3 Team plans to work first with data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, then with the MA Department of Higher Education, the MA Cultural Council, Boston Public Schools, and others to develop an overall action plan focused on several important goals:



Including arts education in STEM policy and practice is a goal of MA SP3 [credit: Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellowship Awardee Emily Lombardo, *The Caprichos Plate 52 – What a Tailor Can Do!* (2014), etching]

- setting in place a policy that would require one year of high school arts education as an admission criterion to Massachusetts public four-year universities, aligning with the existing high school graduation requirement, as is the case for English, math and science;
- including the arts in STEM education policy and practice; and,
- developing and implementing a “Creativity and Innovation Index” that would measure and track progress in the teaching and learning of creativity and innovation across subject lines.



Developing and implementing an index to track creativity learning across subject lines is part of the MA SP3 agenda [credit: Massachusetts Cultural Council]

An added focus, working with and inspired by the success of the California team within the pilot cohort, is increasing the effectiveness of Title 1 strategies by including the funding of arts education.

Consequently, steps in the plan will include:

1. gathering basic information from the arts and cultural community as well as the arts education community;
2. organizing and networking stakeholders by building an arts education agenda with input from statewide and regional meetings, the Boston cultural planning process, and a statewide parent survey;
3. identifying effective messages that convey the value of arts education, including a focus on the value contributed by arts learning to STEM learning, to a broad constituency including stakeholder groups;
4. developing and using narratives to build support for the team’s specific arts policy goals
5. establishing relationships with key political and education leaders to advocate for the statewide arts education policies; and,
6. meeting with education, legislative and political leaders to study and then adopt STEAM as official state policy.

Creating an overarching arts education policy plan would be a landmark achievement for Massachusetts. The Commonwealth’s Board of Education adopted its Arts Curriculum Framework in 1999. That framework presented guidelines for learning, teaching, and assessment in dance, music, theatre, and visual arts for the state’s public schools from pre-K through grade 12. In Massachusetts, the arts are already listed as a core academic subject and, now that the National Coalition for Core Art Standards (NCCAS) has released model standards, plans are being made in the state to start revisions on the existing Arts Curriculum Framework.

For additional information and to participate in Massachusetts SP3 activities, please contact:

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Americans for the Arts’ State Policy Pilot Program (SP3)

A three-year, 50-state initiative with a 10-state pilot component, the State Policy Pilot Program is meant to influence the implementation of federal mandates and programs around arts education at the state level, expand support for arts education policy and funding, and impact local access to arts programs and instruction for students. Through a set of data collection efforts, state-level capacity building, and the convening of a network for knowledge sharing and collective action, the State Policy Pilot Program will strengthen arts education nationally by improving state policy.

For more information, visit: www.AmericansForTheArts.org/SP3.