

Partnership
for
Music Education
Policy Development

A MICHIGAN THINK TANK

POLICY STATEMENT:

**THE NEED FOR A MUSIC REQUIREMENT FOR
MICHIGAN’S ELEMENTARY (K-5) STUDENTS**

Music is a basic, universal form of human expression. Every culture known to history has had its own musical traditions, practices, and rituals. Philosophers, teachers, and leaders throughout the ages have considered music to be a vital part of civil society. Music allows humans to express how and what they feel in ways that other academic disciplines do not. In order to receive a complete, comprehensive, and balanced education, every student must experience a sequential program of music education that develops and embraces musical expression and literacy, delivered by certified music educators.

The *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*—passed in 1994—designated music a national core subject for the first time.¹ This designation continued with the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001, which identified the need to “[strengthen] arts education as an integral part of the elementary school and secondary school curriculum.”² The universality of music and its inclusion as a core subject in federal statutes should naturally lead to a music education requirement for all public school students. Since 2011, all graduates of Michigan high schools have been required to take one credit in the Visual Performing and Applied Arts (VPAA), which includes music. However, there has never been a music requirement for Michigan’s elementary school students.

K-5 Music Requirements in Other States

A recent Department of Education study showed that 94% of all public elementary schools in the United States offer elementary general music.³ Data collected by the Arts Education Partnership revealed that forty-six states require “arts education” in some form (including both the musical and visual arts), with thirty-three states having a specific requirement for weekly music instruction in the elementary grades.⁴ Only four states (Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Michigan) and the District of Columbia have no statutory requirement for elementary music.

A K-5 Music Requirement for Michigan Elementary Students

The Michigan School Code should require elementary schools to provide music education for every student in grades kindergarten to five. The following guidelines should be used in revising the law:

- For each of grades K to 5, the public school shall provide for all pupils at least two class periods of music a week at 45 minutes per class period
- These classes must be taught by a certified (Michigan Department of Education Certificate JQ music endorsement) music teacher
- The governing board of a public school shall ensure that an elementary general music teacher-to-student ratio of no more than 1:400 is maintained
- Curricula should be formed at the local level, consistent with state and national standards
- Each building should have a classroom or teaching space dedicated for music teaching and learning
- An appropriate budget should be established and maintained, consistent with the recommendations of the National Association for Music Education

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¹ Goals 2000, Sec.102.2.3A

² NCLB, Sec.5551.a.1

³ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools: 1999-2000 and 2009-10*, document 2012-014 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2012), 5.

⁴ “A Snapshot of State Policies for Arts Education,” Arts Education Partnership website <http://www.aep-arts.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/A-Snapshot-of-State-Policies-for-Arts-Education.pdf>, accessed 14 April 2014.