CALL TO ACTION: In this distressful, wearying time during which teachers are rallying in regard to pensions and funding, it is to be expected that school faculty is experiencing “advocacy fatigue.” There is no rest for the weary, however, and we hope you can rise to the occasion for one more thing! Yes, it’s like the relentless music director who says "One more time," but stay with this! It's important, too.

Two years ago, arts supporters turned out in droves at Commissioner of Education Stephen Pruitt’s first set of town hall meetings. The enormity of that turnout was still being referenced during meetings of the Kentucky Board of Education, two years later. With the departure of Dr. Pruitt, Town Hall Meetings for 2018 have been cancelled. We need that again, because the KDE has posted an online survey about graduation requirements. (Survey linked in the footer of each page of this document.) In the view of the Coalition for Arts Education, student voice makes a tremendous impact; and in the light of the current emphasis on preparing students for high demand careers, we also recommend that arts supporters invite individuals in business and industry who value the arts to submit. Please share this with parents, students, or friends of the arts; along with an invitation, like, “Please complete this survey, because if you would share your feelings it would make a difference.” People need to be invited and encouraged.

Submitters would be well advised to be prepared. Writing anything accusatory will not win points. When it all boils down, we want the report to the Kentucky Board of Education to indicate the outpouring of support for the visual and performing arts was incredible.

The survey: https://www.research.net/r/gradreqs
What you need to know

The survey will focus on high school graduation requirements. These requirements exist, in part, to require students to take challenging courses that will prepare them for life after high school and to hold schools accountable for graduating students who are college- and career-ready. The administrative regulation spelling out Kentucky’s graduation requirements was last revised in 2013 with the addition of early graduation requirements. Action by the KBE in the near future includes potential updates to the graduation requirements to ensure our students are as prepared as they can be to enter the next phase of their lives.

In advance of submitting, consider the following question: “What should high school graduates be able to know, do and experience to be ready for postsecondary education and/or a career?”

That is a great question, and we hope those revising the requirements will keep in mind various existing adopted standards:

- **The Kentucky Academic Standards for the Visual and Performing Arts**: (see p. 498 of the linked document—also see Appendix of this paper)
- ESSA calls for a well-rounded education that includes the arts
- Kentucky has established the statewide philosophy of education in the seven goals of schools and the capacities it expects every child to develop. Those goals and capacities include the ability to apply core concepts in the arts, the development of students talents and abilities in music, visual art, theater, and dance; and the capacity of a firm grounding in the arts.
- The Rose Decision in 1989 still applies, including a sufficient in seven capacities, including "Grounding in the arts to enable each student to appreciate his or her cultural and historical heritage"

The survey: [https://www.research.net/r/gradreqs](https://www.research.net/r/gradreqs)
We recommend that everyone be sure to mention “the visual and performing arts.” Mention that high school students should be able to have arts in their school day all four years. Below are points intended to inspire your thoughts.

Read through, pick and choose, personalize. They all would to be preceded by, “Those who give consideration toward revising Kentucky’s high school graduation requirements should”—

- Keep in mind that students are human beings with interests and passions that inspire them to excel in all areas of their lives.
- Ensure that schools do not trade or exclude a well-rounded education (per ESSA) in exchange for job training. The “Every Student Succeeds Act” clearly defines the need for all students to have quality educational opportunities and access to the arts at all levels of education. The arts are listed a “core” subjects for all students in ESSA as well as the Framework for 21st Century Learning.
- Ensure that schools provide global and cultural awareness. The arts engage students in global and cultural experiences through the study of and making of arts products and performances reflective of numerous cultures around the world. This provides students with a deep understanding of the ideals and beliefs of those cultures.
- Ensure that schools provide the “4 C’s” outlined in the Framework for 21st Century Learning which is widely accepted as the premiere vision for student success in a global economy. These Critical 21st Century skills are specifically addressed through participation in the visual and performing arts. Those skills are—

1. Creativity and imagination
2. Critical thinking and problem solving
3. Communication skills
4. Collaboration/teamwork skills

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Graduation Requirements Survey

- Ensure that schools provide the Partnership for 21st Century Learning’s “essential life skills,” which are among those developed through participation in the visual and performing arts. Those skills involve—
  - Flexibility & Adaptability
  - Initiative & Self Direction
  - Social & Cross-Cultural Skills
  - Productivity & Accountability
  - Leadership & Responsibility

- Ensure that high school students have access to visual and performing arts classes throughout their high school years. Requirements should provide for all schools to offer varied levels of specialized courses in music, visual art, dance theater/dramatic arts, and potentially media arts in order that a student may specialize and develop independence in the art discipline of his or her individual talent and interest.

- Recommend policy for the high school that requires Visual and Performing Arts courses for which students receive credit to be taught by the appropriate certified arts specialist. Provide a long-range target date for requiring all schools to have certified arts specialists (or specialized endorsements in all arts forms: music, visual art, dance, and theater) who are capable of developing students’ specialized talents and abilities to the highest level. Ensure that students taking survey courses, e.g., The History and Appreciation of the Visual and Performing Arts, are equally served through content delivered by competent visual and performing arts instructors who are sufficiently trained to making those courses meaningful and productive in order to help develop students’ artistic understandings and sensitivities. Phase out certifications that allow non-arts specialists to teach arts appreciation courses.

- Ensure every child has an education in the arts

- Keep in mind that arts classes are core: visual and performing arts study must be considered serious study, the same as other academic pursuits. This includes a sequenced, standards-based curriculum delivered by qualified arts-specialist teachers.

The survey: [https://www.research.net/r/gradreqs](https://www.research.net/r/gradreqs)
teachers who have the skills to ensure the kind of rigor in arts study that leads to artistic literacy and artistic independence.

- Keep in mind that arts education should be grounded in rigorous instruction and meaningful assessment that reflects research-based standards.
- Keep in mind that community resources that provide exposure to the arts should be used to enhance and support in-school, sequenced, standards-based arts education, but should not take the place of it.
- Know that the arts should be valued in the curriculum not only for their intrinsic value, but for the added benefits they provide in developing intellectual strength, creative thinking, and empathy toward others, as well as developing self-confidence and increasing student engagement in school.
- Know that the power of the arts to enhance learning in other subjects is never confused or substituted for education “in” the arts that builds artistic literacy and independence.
- Ensure that secondary arts education provides a sufficient amount of diverse and sequenced specialized courses in each art form to adequately support college and career readiness.

The survey: https://www.research.net/r/gradreqs
Appendix

The Kentucky Academic Standards for Visual and Performing Arts are built on five philosophical foundations and lifelong goals listed below that establish the basis for the standards, and they illuminate artistic literacy by expressing the overarching common values and expectations for learning in arts education across the five arts disciplines including Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theatre, and Visual Art.

1. The Arts as Communication

In today’s multimedia society, the arts are the media, and therefore provide powerful and essential means of communication. The arts provide unique symbol systems and metaphors that convey and inform life experience (i.e., the arts are ways of knowing).

Artistically literate citizens use a variety of artistic media, symbols and metaphors to independently create and perform work that expresses and communicates their own ideas, and are able to respond by analyzing and interpreting the artistic communications of others.

2. The Arts as Creative Personal Realization

Participation in each of the arts as creators, performers, and audience members enables individuals to discover and develop their own creative capacity, thereby providing a source of lifelong satisfaction.

Artistically literate citizens find at least one arts discipline in which they develop sufficient competence to continue active involvement in creating, performing, and responding to art as an adult.

3. The Arts as Culture, History, and Connectors
Throughout history the arts have provided essential means for individuals and communities to express their ideas, experiences, feelings, and deepest beliefs. Each discipline shares common goals but approaches them through distinct media and techniques. Understanding artwork provides insights into individuals’ own and others’ cultures and societies, while also providing opportunities to access, express, and integrate meaning across a variety of content areas.

Artistically literate citizens know and understand artwork from varied historical periods and cultures, and actively seek and appreciate diverse forms and genres of artwork of enduring quality/significance. They also seek to understand relationships among the arts, and cultivate habits of searching for and identifying patterns, relationships between the arts and other knowledge.

4. Arts as Means to Wellbeing

Participation in the arts as creators, performers, and audience members (responders) enhances mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing.

Artistically literate citizens find joy, inspiration, peace, intellectual stimulation, meaning, and other life-enhancing qualities through participation in all of the arts.

5. The Arts as Community Engagement

The arts provide means for individuals to collaborate and connect with others in an enjoyable inclusive environment as they create, prepare, and share artwork that bring communities together.

Artistically literate citizens seek artistic experience and support the arts in their local, state, national, and global communities.

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