



Arts Education and Access Fund Oversight Committee

aeafpdx@gmail.com

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Dear Lisa:

Thanks to you and the team for providing responses to the AOCs questions about the changes to arts educator staffing levels proposed for the 24/25 school year. We also appreciate the hard work PPS is doing to identify the best path forward to educating our youngest children in a challenging environment.

Portlanders voted to restore arts and music education in 2012 because of how critically important arts education is to early childhood education *and* long-term student success. As you may be aware, quality arts education is also about walking the walk on equity. Impacts from quality arts education are greater for low income and students of color.

Proposed Arts Educator Caseloads

We are concerned about the proposed 24/25 arts educator caseloads which, by our estimate, appear to be one K-5 arts educator to 660 kids. (We have calculated this estimate based upon our understanding of a full-time role (30 sections) with the median number of kids per K-5 section in the 23/24 academic year (22 kids) --- 30 sections times 22 kids per section = arts educator caseloads of 660 children.) Source:

<https://www.pps.net/cms/lib/OR01913224/Centricity/Domain/207/Class%20Size%202023-24%20by%20School.pdf>.

The goal of the AEF is to restore arts and music education, focusing specifically on certified arts educators capable of delivering the quality experience that leads to student success. While we note that PPS has preserved instructional minutes in the arts, we have strong concerns about the quality of the educational experience that can be delivered with the proposed caseload. Simply put: an educational experience cannot be a quality experience if the educator sees the child in a fashion so limited the educator will not know each child's name – let alone be able to help them build skills, build community and experience the joy and challenge of art.

Proposed Arts Educator Caseloads

We note that best practices in arts educator caseloads call for staffing levels substantially below 1 teacher to 660 kids, as established by national organizations and peer school districts. We rely on the National Art Education Association Purposes, Principles, and Standards for School Art Programs and the National Association for Music Education National Opportunity to Learn Standards:

- NAEA (National Arts Education Association). At the elementary level, the teacher/pupil ratio in regularly scheduled art experiences is no greater than 1:300-400 per school.
- NAFME (National Association for Music Education): "At least one general music teacher is available for every 400 students enrolled in (all grades in) the school."

- [Boston School Arts Index](#): In partnership with Boston Public Schools, Boston Arts Expansion has created an arts education index. The index lists the following categories for student to teacher ratios: the entry level category (Beginning) is < 1 teacher to 250 kids; (Developing is 1:250, Expanding is >1:250 kids, Excelling is >2:250 kids).
- [Chicago Creative Schools Certification](#): In partnership with Chicago Public Schools, Ingenuity has created a Creative Schools Certification. To be rated excelling schools need to have a ratio of at least 1 teacher to 350 students. In 2022-23, 73% of Chicago's public schools were rated excelling for staffing.

AEAF Investment

The AEAF provided PPS with \$4.75 million dollars in academic year 22/23 alone. Over the past decade it has provided \$51M for the district to use to fund arts and music education for K-5 students, funds intended to boost and supplement the district's own arts education budget. We recognize that PPS has made significant progress over the past decade in establishing robust arts education for all students. We want to ensure that Portlanders, and our kids, continue to realize the benefits of this substantial investment.

Next Steps

We ask that PPS:

1. Provide the AOC data about the proposed 24/25 arts educator caseloads as soon as it is available.
2. Reconsider the application of FTE as the primary means of calculating arts educator staffing. This results in an educator to student caseload of 1:660, substantially outside of best practices guidelines.
3. Work in partnership with the AOC and the City Office of Arts and Culture in the coming year to formalize a mutually-agreeable definition of high-quality arts education that could inform decisions around arts staffing moving forward.

In partnership for kids and arts access,

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