

Asking for Art

Leslie Ann Kunkel

What is advocacy? What is an arts advocate? Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary tells us that an advocate is one that pleads the cause of another. The information provided by advocates for a cause hopefully helps leaders make informed decisions. An arts advocate is one who educates the community on the essential nature of the arts.

Arts educators work together to share information with administrators and colleagues, and educate parents and communities on the importance of the arts. Advocacy is something that everyone can do to encourage support of the arts.

Arts Standards and Content

The arts are disciplines with their own standards and their own content, and arts educators know that classes in the arts involve learning, not just activities. They involve sequential study in a standards-based program taught and assessed by certified arts educators, and teach skills necessary for the twenty-first century: communication, critical thinking, creative problem solving, and methods, techniques and strategies for collaborative work. In other words, we teach and emphasize many of the same things as the other academic areas.

The arts are a necessary and integral part of every child's education; but the arts are losing their place in our schools. Arts advocates from across the curriculum are needed.

An Arts Advocacy Position Paper

Recently, Pennsylvania Art Education Association (PAEA) advocacy co-chairs Wendy Milne and Heide Sheetz brought together the leadership of arts organizations to create an arts advocacy position paper. The hope is that this paper will help define core beliefs of arts education advocates and



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be used to inform leaders as decisions that impact the arts are made. A position paper such as this is a helpful tool for the arts advocate—that person can be you.

Arts Advisory

To support lifelong learning in the arts, several Pennsylvania arts organizations have developed a position paper stating our core beliefs. The arts as referred to include dance, music, theater, and visual arts as noted in the Pennsylvania Standards.

Our core beliefs read as follows. We believe:

- arts education is basic to an individual's intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, cultural, and emotional development;
- the curricula must include a balanced, comprehensive, and sequential Pre K–12, standards-based program in both the fine and performing arts for all students. These programs must be taught and assessed by certified arts educators;
- all students and programs require dedicated facilities appropriate for arts instruction and the budgetary

support needed to provide all materials and equipment necessary for learning;

- certified arts educators who have equal standing with other core educators and are full, professional employees of the entity they serve are essential and necessary for all students;
- in promoting collaboration through alliances and partnerships with regional, state, and national arts organizations to build a stronger voice of support for arts education and raise public awareness of the value of arts education.

In agreement with our beliefs, the arts are core academic subjects under the No Child Left Behind Act and mandated by Chapter 4 (Standards and Assessments) of the Pennsylvania School Code.

We need to ask for more art. Request classes when they are not offered and maintain and expand the programs that exist. In our roles as educators, we can all be arts advocates! 🙏

Leslie Ann Kunkel is an art teacher at Highland Middle School in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania.