



# Maine Art Education Association

P.O. Box 10463, Portland Maine 04104

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May 15, 2020

## **Dear Superintendents, Principals, and School Board Chairs,**

As a K-12 Art Educator and President of the Maine Art Education Association it is my conviction that the Arts are essential to all students because of what they bring to their experience as learners. The Arts serve students as a language for creative expression, as motivation to be present and engage in new challenges, and as a catalyst for forming creative and critical thinking skills.

The Visual Arts are our first language of lines, shapes, colors, and patterns. Learning how to make art using this language develops effective communication skills. This language becomes more complex and nuanced as students dig deeper into the techniques and processes of the Arts to cultivate their creative voices throughout their K-12 school experience. Additionally, the Arts enhance understanding of the world as a whole as students explore this language across cultures and apply it across curricula.

The Visual Arts create anticipation for a whole day, week, and year of learning. Students know and look forward to their "Art Days." For some students it is the reason they come to school. Part of the lure of the art classroom is the fun of experimenting with art materials, which provide a medium for student curiosity, promote a growth mindset of learning through "mistakes," and help students develop the persistence to try again.

The Visual Arts are in a unique position to develop both creative and critical thinking skills. Making artworks requires thinking through processes. Reflecting upon art experiences gives students an appreciation for what worked and how to approach what didn't. Learning in and through the Visual Arts brings students' attention to planning, evaluating, and revising until the desired results are achieved. Inquiry thrives in an environment where there isn't a single correct answer to a problem.

The Arts' service to society has become profoundly apparent during this time of staying safe at home. Creativity in all its forms has been the hallmark of the last few months. A quick survey of social media shows how central the Arts have become to each of our lives; from Quarantine Karaoke to Museum Challenges, and all of the ways we rely on to communicate from a distance. The Arts keep us entertained and connected. The creation and appreciation of the Arts in all their forms begins with the Arts as essential programming in K-12 public schools.

**I urge you to continue your commitment to quality Arts programs. Thank you.**

Sincerely,

Lisa Ingraham  
President, Maine Art Education Association