

Maryland Teacher Effectiveness Council

The Board Room

Anne Arundel County Public Schools

January 10, 2011

Fine Arts Presentation

Mary Ann Mears 410-435-2265

Jay Tucker 410-767-0352

Introduction

The state of Maryland's goals for the current third wave of educational reform, including its objectives for Race to the Top initiatives, are linked in supportive ways to work currently being undertaken collaboratively by MSDE staff, the Superintendent's Fine Arts Education Advisory Panel (FAEAP), local school systems, and the Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance (AEMS).

Over the past two decades, this work has focused on the following:

- Establishing high quality state standards and curriculum in the fine arts;
- Improving pre-service teacher preparation programs and enhancing in-service professional development opportunities;
- Developing student assessment and program evaluation strategies and tools; and
- Using data to inform instructional practice.

This work provides important contexts for the evaluation of Educator Effectiveness. In fact, we believe that educator effectiveness cannot be looked at in isolation—in our remarks today we will include some discussion of relationships between indicators of program quality and teacher effectiveness.

Think Tank

Jay led the first of two Think Tank sessions at MSDE on December 7, 2010. Ms. Mary Ann Mears was present as an observer. Mary Ann, is the founder of the Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance, is a long standing trustee of Maryland Citizens for the Arts, and has been a member of the Maryland Fine Arts Education Advisory Panel since its inception. Other observers included Dr. Lillian Pailen, director of the Maryland Artist/Teacher Institute and Ms. Cheryl Bost, a member of the Educator Effectiveness Council. The Participants were from the following representative school systems and higher education institutions: Baltimore, Cecil, Frederick, Howard, and Prince George's counties; Maryland Institute College of Art and Towson University. The participants engaged in an extensive and very thoughtful discussion of teacher evaluation in the fine arts for an entire afternoon.

This Council requested each of the various content think tank groups to respond specifically to a set of questions that it had prepared. The following brief synopsis summarizes our discussion after one meeting.

1. What models are currently being used for educator evaluation?

Regarding Current practice—There was considerable consistency among the participants regarding current approaches to arts teacher evaluation. A number of systems use a version of Charlotte Danielson’s approach.

In its literature, the Danielson Group notes that *An effective system of teacher evaluation accomplishes two things:*

- *It ensures quality teaching and it promotes professional learning.*
- *The quality of teaching is the single most important determinant of student learning; a school district’s system of teacher evaluation is the method by which it ensures that teaching is of high quality.*
- *Therefore, the system developed for teacher evaluation must have certain characteristics:*
 - *It must be rigorous, valid, reliable, and defensible, and must be grounded in a research-based and accepted definition of good teaching.*

There is some variation among school systems regarding who actually conducts teacher evaluation, and some systems have noted that there is aspiration to use the Danielson evidenced-based self-evaluation methodology although in practice most use her more traditional observational framework.

2. Can you identify multiple measures that can fairly measure student growth in your field while taking into account teaching diversity?

There was consensus around the importance of evaluating deeper skills that are vital in arts instruction. For example, enabling students in terms of

- Their ownership of artistic processes,
- Their ability to produce increasingly complex work, and to enhance their creative capacities, and
- Their ability to think critically about their own processes and products.

The importance of teacher growth was also discussed, particularly the uses of professional development plans and self-evaluation of progress.

3. How can your specific field of instruction be beneficial to the growth of students in other fields?

Discussion of the evaluation of teacher effectiveness when implementing Arts Integrated programs was discussed. Arts Integration (AI) as an important educational strategy is growing in Maryland. In some cases, school system policy decisions have designated selected schools as arts integrated schools. In

other sites, schools have self-selected an arts integration focus and view themselves as AI schools. In all of these schools, arts teachers play leadership roles and a more collaborative kind of evaluation may be appropriate.

4. How would you define effective and highly effective in your field? Of the items you identified, how are they outcome measureable?

Given that 50% of the evaluation is to be tied to evidence of student growth, discussion focused on the status of student assessment across the state. The consensus is that Portfolio Plus (PP), an existing MSDE initiative that we will describe in a moment, is the best approach. While MSDE work on PP has been delayed because of a reduction in funding during the current recession, some individual school systems have made progress and, facilitated by MSDE, have been sharing that work.

5. How would you define effective and highly effective for a principal? Of the items you identified, how are they outcome measureable?

A number of factors were discussed related to principal effectiveness including the following: Effective principals

- Empower and support teachers that believe in students,
- Are confidential and professional,
- Clearly communicate expectations,
- Are equitable and transparent, and
- Are active in the field.

It was also suggested that highly effective principals steward the faculty so that teachers' successes are also principals' successes and that highly effective principals are motivators and inspirers who operate from uplifting and inspiring places.

A couple measures currently used that may be applicable when measuring principal effectiveness include teacher transfer rates and climate surveys that may or may not be shared publicly.

Now we will attempt to place that discussion in context of ongoing work in which Maryland leads the nation.

Existing MSDE Policy and Proposed Initiatives

The Maryland State Board of Education has established two policies:

- The arts – dance, music, theatre and the visual arts – are essential core subject areas, and

- All students will participate in fine arts programs that enable them to meet content and achievement standards established by State standards for the arts.

In 1995, the State Board of Education approved a goal assuring equity of access to high quality fine arts education which meets state standards for the fine arts - dance, music, theatre and visual arts – **with the stipulation that accountability for meeting the goal be developed.** The MSDE Fine Arts Education Advisory Panel, which is broadly representative of the field and the state, was appointed and charged with making recommendations for implementing the standards and recommending strategies for evaluating the success of fine arts programs in meeting or exceeding the state’s fine arts standards. While the Fine Arts Think Tank is a newly constituted group, it builds on the FAEAP’s work related to fine arts policy development and its implementation over the past decade.

This work includes:

- Development of content standards, curriculum, and tools for improving instruction, such as *The Maryland Fine Arts Instructional Tool Kit*, a valuable online resource for classroom teachers as well as fine arts specialists, which aligns assessment development with the State Curriculum and best instructional practices;
- Development and implementation of state-wide professional development initiatives and support for locally developed PD programs; and
- Support for developing local school system arts advisory panels and fine arts strategic planning and implementation as a precursor to system master planning.

Further, The FAEAP’s recommendations have contributed to the State’s policy for accountability for the fine arts that is encompassed in *Portfolio Plus*.

Portfolio Plus

Portfolio Plus is a comprehensive, multidimensional set of strategies that will be designed to ensure the quality of fine arts instruction and provide clear and comprehensive evidence of student growth.

Assessment of learning in the fine arts requires recognition that evidence of what students know and can do is multidimensional. Evidence of creative expression, or art making (the dimension most commonly associated with "the arts"), is only one of many dimensions that contribute to the definition of proficiency.

Artistic literacy also encompasses perceptual awareness, historical perspective, and informed aesthetic judgment, all of which are addressed in the Maryland fine arts content standards and curriculum through measurable learning objectives. These objectives are easily accessible for classroom instructional use and, by extension, for student assessment.

Achievement of all learning outcomes cannot be measured by traditional means. Alternative assessment modes, such as performance-based and portfolio assessments, are included in Portfolio Plus.

- These modes provide ways to obtain a more comprehensive picture of student learning, and they allow students with cultural and language differences to more fairly demonstrate learning.
- Students are asked to perform tasks that require tangible evidence of creating, performing, and responding behaviors, and
- They are able to reflect on their own progress. This approach integrates assessment into the student's learning process seamlessly.

Through the development and use of a variety of assessment strategies encompassed in **Portfolio Plus**, it is believed that a number of goals for evaluation of arts learning can be met. These assessment tools are intended to be useful to teachers in evaluating student learning and honing instructional practice and to local school systems and the state in measuring the effectiveness of arts education programs.

The intent of **Portfolio Plus** is that assessment approaches are developed that are appropriately conducted by individual teachers, by school systems, by school systems in collaboration with MSDE, and by MSDE.

The think tank's recommendation on measurement of student growth at this point in the discussions is Portfolio Plus because it is the model that will provide the broadest and deepest appropriate measures for analyzing student growth.

MSDE has researched and developed an array of fine arts assessment tools that form the foundation for **Portfolio Plus**. To date this work has included

- a literature review: *State-of-the-Art in Large-Scale Fine Arts Assessments*;
- an Essential Learner Outcomes (ELO) Classification Document, which provides recommendations for types of assessment for each Indicator of Learning in the fine arts ELOs;
- prototype on-demand assessment items developed in all four fine arts content areas at the elementary, middle, and high school levels;
- item banks in music and visual arts developed at the elementary, middle, and high school levels;
- And a protocol for portfolio assessment.

The vision is that this be a collaborative effort between and among systems and the state. Each student's portfolio would capture that student's growth during each academic year, as well as, across their entire education career. The collected portfolios of the students of any given teacher will afford ample material for evaluation of the teacher based on student growth.

Technology (cloud ideally) would enable use of student portfolios to evaluate student growth and be the basis for teacher evaluation by the local system and by the state in separately structured processes.

Local systems and the state may independently review the student portfolios as evidence of teacher effectiveness. The state's review by trained panels from outside the given system of random samples of student portfolios for each teacher will ensure an objective review yielding data on the teacher's effectiveness linked to state standards. It will also vet the local system's teacher evaluation by affording a comparison of local evaluation data with state data. It is recommended that the state process include opportunities for re-review in the event that a teacher feels unfairly evaluated.

Program Evaluation

Teacher evaluation needs to be integrated with program evaluation at the system and state levels.

The FAEAP has recommended development of a protocol for documentation of fine arts programs evidencing compliance with COMAR in provision of instruction in the state fine arts curriculum. Evidence of teacher effectiveness based on student growth will certainly be a vital component. However, it is not adequate.

For measurements of teacher effectiveness to be meaningful, they need to be linked to program evaluation. Resources, including time for instruction are critical factors to consider. A teacher delivering art instruction from a cart in two schools is handicapped, and his or her students are severely shortchanged! Evaluating teachers will not ensure equity for children. Obviously, if an appropriately trained, highly qualified teacher is not available, the child is not even in the race to the top and is left way behind.

Dr. Grasmick and members of the State Board share our deep concerns –

We would like to cite MSDE Intended initiatives Dr. Grasmick described in a letter of commitment, which was part of an i-3 collaborative grant application submitted but not funded. Dr. Kevin Maxwell was the lead investigator. These initiatives reflect thinking about the interconnections of accountability measures clearly and well.

- “Extending and accelerating the development, implementation, and evaluation of the assessment work already begun in the context of Portfolio Plus, including refining and publishing online a Portfolio Protocol and the development, piloting, and dissemination of exemplary assessment models in partnership with local school systems and institutions of higher education.
- Working with i-3 partners to develop (8) alternative documentation and review protocols that local school systems might use to certify compliance with Code of Maryland Regulations for Programs in Fine Arts, and sharing

these models with stakeholders in the 24 school systems and the Maryland State Board of Education for consideration and action. These documentation and review protocols will include options for reporting on inputs and student outcomes in the form of student portfolio and other assessments that complement data available through the longitudinal data system.”

Dr. Grasmick also drew connections “to the need to evaluate the quality of pre- and in-service training programs for arts specialists and for teachers in arts integration and sharing the findings of these efforts with the field and the Maryland State Board of Education for its consideration and action.”

A further comment on the final point-- Dr. Grasmick and Dr. Freeman Hrabowski co-hosted a Deans’ Roundtable almost two years ago at which teacher training in the arts and arts integration both pre- and in-service were discussed based on preliminary research here in Maryland. Pursuant to the recommendations of the 70 Deans who participated (Deans of education and deans of arts and sciences)—the FAEAP and the AEMS Higher Education in the Arts Task Force (HEAT Force) have continued to conduct research and develop recommendations in order to strengthen teacher pre- and in-service training in the fine arts. It is essential to develop mechanisms for ongoing collection of data on teacher’s pre- and in-service programs, including teacher reflections on what has been useful or not in order to improve teacher training. A point particularly relevant to today’s presentation-- while there has been some teacher training in portfolio assessment, it continues to be an essential identified need to support program improvement and teacher effectiveness.

We have a terrific partnership with institutions of higher education across the state who engaged in this roundtable experience and with whom we work on an ongoing basis.

Conclusion:

We will believe that the ideal process is for MSDE to collaborate with systems that choose to participate in developing Portfolio Plus as the basis for measuring student growth and, in turn, teacher effectiveness evaluation programs. This approach is the gold standard, and it will have intellectual integrity and serve the best interests of students and educators. Student growth measurement will be based on the assessments that are integral to instruction and learning. In addition, this approach is cost effective as there need not be duplication of development and administering of student assessments by local systems and the state.

This approach will mesh well with best practices that the Think Tank has preliminarily identified for the elements of educator effectiveness evaluation not linked to student growth. We have focused in this presentation on the 50% of educator effectiveness evaluation tied to student growth, as that is the new dimension being added to more traditional methods. As noted earlier, the Think

Tank consensus supports the Danielson approach that involves evidence based-self evaluation. We do want to underline that point.

We believe we have a model, which has application to other subject areas. Our approach requires the linkage of student growth, educator evaluation, program evaluation and the evaluation of teacher training and professional development in order to have intellectual integrity and to serve the needs of Maryland students and meet the State Board's goals.

Our capacity to realize this is limited absent modest funds whether from local, state, federal or private sources. If the will is there, Maryland is poised to be the national leader in arts education; **we have a great team waiting for the go ahead.**