

P20 Task Force on Arts Education in Maryland Schools Meeting Notes

Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Conference Room 2, 8th Floor

October 25, 2013, 9:30 – Noon

Members Present: John Baugher, Mark Coates, Theresa Colvin, Eleni Dykstra, Judy Jenkins, Peter Kannam, Martin Knott, Kwame Kwei-Armah; Anita Lambert, Dr. Maravene Loeschke, Dr. Kevin Maxwell, Dr. Stephen Miles, Dr. Khalid Mumin, Christopher Nunzio, Rick Penix, Lisa Stuart, Sonia Synkowski, Carol Trawick, and Co chairs, Mary Ann Mears and Dr. Jack Smith.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Jack and Mary Ann introduced themselves and shared their backgrounds. Mary Cary introduced herself, Alexa Milroy, and Dr. Jim Foran. Mary Ann then asked task force members to introduce themselves and describe the constituent group they represent.

II. Background of Task Force

Mary Ann shared that the Governor has been involved in the establishment of this task force from the very beginning. She has had many conversations with the Governor. He has expressed his frustration about the inconsistency in arts education around the state. He wanted to know why there is no data on the arts, e.g., number of teachers, funding, and the number of sections of various arts classes. He wants Maryland to lead the country in innovation, and he believes that arts can pave the way. The Governor definitely wants to do something before his term ends. Mary Ann discussed the Governor's interest with Mary Cary with whom she has worked for many years. Mary suggested that they consider establishing a statewide task force and work through the P20 Council,

since that is under the Office of the Governor. Mary Ann met with the Governor's staff again, and they liked the idea a great deal. The Governor also liked the idea. Mary Ann and Mary then went before the P20 Council to propose the establishment of the task force. The Council was extremely enthusiastic about the idea and formally voted unanimously to establish the P20 Council Task Force on Arts Education in Maryland Schools.

Mary Ann shared her excitement about the task force and stated that Maryland is positioned to make enormous change to help ensure that all students across the state have a rich arts program.

III. Review of the Charge of the Task Force

Jack referred the task force members to the charge in their packets. He focused on policies and regulations as a significant part of the charge to the task force. He commented that we need to find out the current status of arts education in Maryland, as well as where children are not well-served. He commented that there are many strong programs across the state, but Maryland can always get better. Jack said that as a task force, we want to go down to granular levels as we pull together the data from school systems, as well as do a thorough review of research and literature. Then we will make recommendations to the P20 Council. And report, with the recommendations, will be available digitally so that everyone in the state has full access to it.

IV. Review of the Timeline

Jack asked task force members to pull out their timelines from their packets. He went through the timeline and reminded the task force that we want to get the recommendations in by June.

V. Discussion of the Review of the Literature/Research Section

Mary Ann informed the task force that one of the very important sections of the final report will be the Review of the Literature/Research section. We will be citing research in the document (State, national, and local).

We will also have a full appendix that will be a review of the literature and will include a selected bibliography.

Mary Ann mentioned that she and Jack are very interested in getting citations from members of the task force so that we can make sure we have all of the most recent research available to support our work. She asked task force members to share them with us today by completing the form in their folders and giving them to Mary by the end of the meeting. She also said that they could send the citations to (mcary@aems-edu.org) after the meeting if they are unable to remember the source while they are here today and as they find new articles and research.

VI. Discussion of Subcommittee Structure

Mary Ann shared the subcommittee structure with task force members and asked them to review the handout in their packets. She reviewed the name of each subcommittee and asked members to read the specific responsibilities for each subcommittee. She made the point that these subcommittees derive from early thinking on the nature of the charge to the task force and what successfully meeting that charge would entail. She told the task force that there is some fluidity in the charge of each of the subcommittees. She also thanked the chairs of the subcommittees who have agreed to serve in that capacity.

In reading the subcommittee descriptions, it was suggested that the report includes central office allocations, building allocations, grade level allocations, and what each teacher is allowed to do. Mary Ann informed task force members that the subcommittees will have a lot of flexibility in expanding their work once they are in full operation. She also noted that some aspects of the work, e.g. professional development, will probably be considered by more than one subcommittee. She asked task force members to complete the sheet of paper in their packets that requests their top two choices of subcommittees. She said that staff would get back to them after today's meeting to give them their committee assignments and arrange for subcommittee meeting dates.

VII. Discussion of Outreach Effort

Jack shared with the group that it is important to engage as many stakeholder groups as possible in this effort. There will be electronic outreach through the AEMS website where information on the work of the task force will reside. This will also be a place where stakeholders can submit their best thinking and recommendations by completing a form. There will also be regional meetings for gathering input and recommendations. This feedback will be shared with appropriate subcommittees of the task force so that it can help inform their work.

Jack mentioned that the staff is working on the structure for collecting and reporting data. He referred to it as a “blameless autopsy” to find out what exists without making people defensive.

VIII. Workgroups

Jack asked the task force to break into workgroups by counting off 1 to 4. They then went to their groups in different parts of the room. He walked them through the handouts in their folders and asked them to use those handouts as their guide as they met in their groups. He also asked them to refer to the “Notes” on the subcommittee structure handout. Jack shared that they needed to do four things in their groups:

1. Determine any additional data/information/evidence (beyond those listed on page 2 of the Subcommittee Structure handout) needs that they think the task force will require to complete its work.
2. Generate questions they think we should ask in public engagement sessions in order to make sure we understand what stakeholders are thinking. Three draft tools were in their packets.
3. Suggest strategies for outreach efforts. Any thoughts beyond the electronic outreach efforts and the regional meetings? What groups should be contacted?
4. Discuss possible panel and/or individual presentations they would like to see for a subsequent task force meeting.

IX. Reconvene as a Task Force

Jack reconvened the workgroups as a full task force. He thanked them for their engagement and asked each group to report out. The reports were as follows:

Workgroup # 1

The group felt as though they could not remove any of the characteristics from the first draft question tool. They believe that the arts connect to the Common Core as well as to the general curriculum of the school. They stated that the fine arts can create cultural competencies, and they can help students adjust to globalization. Furthermore, the fine arts have to be part of a revitalization effort in communities across this country. The report needs to connect the fine arts to economic development, colleges, universities, and community colleges. Higher education could allow for internships and provide mentors to go into classroom. Higher education could also assist with professional development for arts educators and establish Professional Development Schools for the arts. Resources drive what can and cannot be done, so the report needs to comment on best practices that are broad based and attainable. LEAs want local autonomy and policies to support it. Additionally, the evaluation of school leaders should have a fine arts component – then they would pay attention to it.

Workgroup # 2

This workgroup began with the topic of arts integration. They stated that we need to find ways to connect the schools to the arts. They addressed the questions with suggestions regarding identifying partnership programs exist, e.g., Strathmore and BSO and looking at community resources, including the non-profits and arts councils. They commented on the importance of model programs that can be expanded and the processes for gathering information. They also suggested inviting people to be part of focus groups by topic, with questions for students about the arts, as well as questions about the content of teacher education programs. This group recommended that Board of Education members should be brought in, as should Nancy Grasmick, former State Superintendent and author, Daniel Pink.

Workgroup # 3

This group preferred “outcomes” to the word “goals” on the first open-ended question sheet. They asked that “subjects” replace “discipline” on this same question sheet. They suggested that we get the background of the person being surveyed so we understand their lens. On the second page (more open-ended questions), they wanted to ask responders if they thought that students in Maryland receive a world-class education in the arts. This group suggested that perhaps alignment needed to be part of the question regarding the role of higher education. They commented on the importance of asking businesses to request well-rounded graduates. In the third question they suggested using the phrase “local decision makers” rather than “policy makers” because someone, such as a scheduler, can have great influence regarding staffing and instructional time. They said we should demand equitable access to quality arts education for all children.

Workgroup # 4

This group suggested that we should be asking how the arts influenced stakeholders themselves on topics, such as the economic benefits of the arts. They identified parents, students, teachers, artists, higher education, professional organizations, local government, and funders as critical stakeholders. For panels, they suggested individuals such as arts teachers, supervisors, students who are successful in the arts, and those who are in school because of the arts. They also suggested that we try to find famous people connected to the arts who can talk about their importance. They also shared some possible names: Ed Norton, Bob Lynch, Dick Deasy, Karen Carol (MICA), Daniel Pink, J. D. Talesek, and university researchers.

Jack asked for other thoughts. Below are some sample comments:

One suggestion was that every superintendent and Board of Education should receive a “status of the arts” report for their county so that they can compare themselves to other counties. This could serve as motivation to increase student access to the arts.

A comment on the power of polling data came up. Comments on polls that are being discussed by various stakeholders and polls in existence were made. It was noted that there is presently a proposal to poll a large body of Marylanders and ask them what they think about arts education. Comments were expressed regarding the use of polling data to influence legislators and the Governor in terms of possible funding. Mary Ann mentioned two polls that the Maryland State Arts Council has done. Another national poll focused on fostering children's imagination.

The results of the polls to date show that Marylanders truly value the arts as an important part of their quality of life. Mary Ann mentioned that it needs to be decided if the new poll being proposed is parallel to the work of the task force, or if it is part of the task force work.

One member stated that his county now counts how many students were sent to All-State for music. It is through checking these kinds of data that we have a reflective opportunity to see how we can improve.

During this discussion, the following questions emerged as ones to consider in task force deliberations: Are we really giving students a comprehensive program? How do we build a scalable, sustainable model so the LEAs can act on it in a meaningful way? How important are the arts? Can we study what cultures are represented in arts programs? Do they reflect the cultural diversity of the State?

Members agreed with the comment that the task force needs to articulate that the arts are an integral part of our lives, are "a secret weapon" of the United States, and make other countries look at us differently.

Others commented on the need to look at the impact of the arts on the economy to make the intrinsic argument about the value of the arts.

X. Closing and Review of Plans for Next Meeting

Mary Ann stated that we have the best arts programs in the country, but we still have a long way to go. She reminded the group that we have a very tight timeline and that subcommittees will report on the status of

their work at the next meeting in December, which means they will need to meet as a group before that time.

She also reminded them to give her their subcommittee selections.

She reminded them to send to Mary any citations for the Review of the Literature/Research section they may have. Alexa explained that there will be a Drop Box site for sharing documents with the task force.

Mary Ann informed the group that Jack and she were willing to move the meetings to other central locations and would love to have someone on the task force provide a location. She requested that anyone with a room that could accommodate the group to please fill out the form in their folder and leave it with Mary.

Mary Ann thanked the group for all of their hard work and thoughtfulness today, on behalf of Jack and her, and wished them safe travels home.