Task Force on Arts Education in Maryland Schools
Meeting Notes

Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Conference Room 1, 8th Floor

March 28, 2014, 9:30 – Noon

Attendees
Mary Ann Mears (co-chair), Dr. Jack Smith (co-chair), Theresa Colvin, Dr. Kevin Maxwell, Nancy Highsmith, Judy Jenkins, Peter Kannam, Dr. Brit Kirwan, Anita Lambert, Dr. Maravene Loeschke, Chris Nunzio, Rick Penix, Sonia Synkowski, Carol Trawick, Dr. Pat Welsh, Mary Cary (staff)

Welcome and Opening Remarks
Dr. Jack Smith – Jack asked Task Force members to introduce themselves.

Mary Ann Mears – Mary Ann said that on April 22 there will be a corporate breakfast to engage business leaders in matters regarding student access to arts education and to gather their input for the Task Force.

STEM/STEAM Discussion
Jack Smith said today we will continue the STEAM/STEM conversation that we began at the last meeting.

Maravene Loeschke began the conversation about STEM/STEAM. She said that the notion of STEAM is coming into more and more conversations. Towson did some behind the scenes digging to see if anyone was using STEAM instead of STEM in Maryland. So far, there does not appear to be any consensus in that regard. Do we want to do anything more formal with the term? Do we want to use STEM or STEAM in the final report?

Carol Trawick stated that 63 members of Congress have formed a STEAM (not STEM) caucus. Maybe we should mention it rather than pushing the issue. Brit Kirwan mentioned that digital art is a major focus of the Corcoran and College Park explored forming a partnership with them. He thinks STEAM will have legs in the future on Maryland campuses citing Wallace Loh's use of the term.

Personally, he said he could support the use of the term STEAM; it could help the different departments on college campuses not feel marginalized. In fact, it could have a unifying effect. Or perhaps we should just emphasize the arts instead of forcing the issue of STEAM.

Mary Ann Mears said that cross-disciplinary activity generates creativity and that interest in building creativity is one factor in the interest in STEAM. She cautioned that we need to be intellectually honest in that STEAM won't work if it is superficial. Brit Kirwan mentioned that gaming, which is an industry in itself, requires the arts. This might be a good time to develop an alliance between the arts and the sciences. Maravene Loeschke noted that Towson is actually doing a lot of STEAM work and suggested that it might be a way to give the arts an equal weighting. She is hopeful that we are further along than she once thought. Perhaps we should have a paragraph describing why STEAM is important and why the arts are important to science and vice versa.

Kevin Maxwell said we should include this conversation in our work. Kids are missing context when art is minimized. We have cut things back so far that some kids are only seeing arts teachers every nine weeks. Anita Lambert stressed the notion of leadership making a huge difference. She thinks we should identify STEAM specifically rather than in general. Peter Kannam expressed concern about substance and that we should be talking about "thoughtful integration." Carol Trawick agreed that we should be talking about thoughtful integration. Mary Ann Mears suggested that we should describe model programs in STEAM. Kevin Maxwell stated that we need to take the conversation to the next step by asking the question "so what" as a result of the content learned.

Jack Smith said we should make everything as simple as possible but not oversimplify it. He suggested that sometimes it is STEAM. Other times it is arts integration for the aesthetic experience. Rick Penix said that we need to be careful about contrived connections rather than meaningful connections. How does it contribute to the social, emotional well-being of the child? Anita Lambert suggested that we need to be careful; we need to have deep conversations about what it means.

Brit Kirwan stated that we need to look at it organically; it will continue to evolve. We need to continue to promote the arts, and STEAM is one way of doing it. Jack Smith added that we need to get the context back into learning because what we are really talking about is our cultural sensitivities. Kevin Maxwell said an overemphasis on some subjects is causing an under-emphasis on others. We tend

to measure schools in such a narrow lens, and we ignore the many arts successes we have had. Our schools are being portrayed in such a narrow way that we lose the focus in the arts. The only access to reading cannot be a reading course. The only access to mathematics should not be a mathematics course.

Jack Smith asked Task Force members to write a paragraph on thoughtful integration – passions and thoughts - and send them to Mary Cary. Staff will synthesize the responses and have them for the next meeting.

Description of Trends and Themes Workgroup Process

Jack Smith said that he wanted to talk about process moving forward. We have gathered a huge amount of perception information from various persons in different venues across the state. We need to synthesize the information that has been accumulated through the forums, surveys, etc. Jack and his assistant are pulling together like items. We need a small group of the Task Force to meet with Jack to come up with statements about what people are saying. He thinks it may take a couple of hours for two different sessions. He will put out a call for volunteers.

Description of Writing Workgroup Process

Jack Smith said that he wanted to pull together a small group to discuss the committee reports and make some decisions about synthesizing proposed recommendations for the final report. We want to make sure Task Force members are engaged in the entire process. Mary Cary will be working with a group on this effort. We will have this part of the content together for our May meeting.

Presentation of Draft Recommendations and Accompanying Matter

Policy and Regulations Committee

Judy Jenkins emphasized that COMAR in the arts has not changed since 1994. She referred the Task Force to draft documents and walked through them for the Task Force. There was discussion of the need for program guidelines included under "strategies." There was a conversation about how we would monitor the implementation of the new COMAR regulation. Kevin Maxwell stated that local school systems need to get feedback from the review.

Resource Allocation

Sonia Synkowski reviewed the draft work from the Resource Committee. The Task Force engaged in a conversation about staffing and certification issues. It was noted that there are no higher education programs in theater education leading to certification in Maryland. All that Maryland has in theater education

certification is Praxis for secondary teachers. Given that the COMAR amendment recommendation from the Policy and Regulation committee includes strengthened language regarding theater at the elementary and middle levels this is a concern. We need to look at alternative certification strategies. The Task Force on teacher preparation is considering these issues. Perhaps we should show models of what is working in our final report.   It was also noted that the preparation of non-arts teachers in the arts should be strongly stated in #7.

Curriculum and Instruction
Mary Ann delivered the report for Mark Coates. Rick Penix made the point that perhaps we can identify best practices to help local school systems.

MaryAnn spoke about the release on March 22nd by the Arts Education Partnership (AEP) of the new publication *A Snapshot of State Policies for Arts Education* in tandem with the upgraded searchable database on the AEP website *ArtScan* which provides information on state policy regarding arts education. She noted that the Task Force should cross-reference our work with this resource to be sure we meet or exceed other states' progress.

Mary Cary said she would send the meeting notes as well as the draft structure of the report to Task Force members. She said she would like to talk with committee chairs in the next couple of weeks.