

OKLAHOMA

AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS STATE POLICY PILOT PROGRAM – SP3

Oklahoma has been selected, after applying on a competitive basis, to be one of ten (10) pilot states to participate in Americans for the Arts' comprehensive national campaign to advance arts education, the [State Policy Pilot Program](#) (SP3).



All photos courtesy of the Oklahoma Arts Council

The Oklahoma SP3 Team will facilitate an action plan for the development and implementation of an arts education policy strategy for a 3-year period. Americans for the Arts will provide in-depth customized technical assistance and \$10,000 each year to assist Oklahoma in successfully creating its plan and achieving its planned goals. To ensure that best practices will be developed, both in the state and nationally, the team will attend an annual symposium to share learning with other state teams, participate annually in a meeting of the State Arts Advocacy Network, and produce a final report, outlining what worked and did not work during participation in the pilot program. These final report case studies will be turned into policy development tools for the field.

The SP3 initiative has provided the encouragement, funding and technical assistance necessary to make significant progress in building Oklahoma an infrastructure with the capacity to advance arts education throughout the state.

- The Oklahoma Arts Council is providing project management and investing staff resources in SP3 activities.
- The SP3 Team additionally contains leadership from Oklahomans for the Arts, the Oklahoma State Department of Education, the Oklahoma Alliance for Arts Education, and members of the state legislature. Plans call for the Team to provide ongoing leadership in policy development and implementation.
- A statewide Task Force has been created to plan and carry out activities that advance arts education in Oklahoma. With more than 20 positions, it demonstrates broad stakeholder representation from the arts, arts education, K-12 and higher education, not-for-profits and museums, the Creative Oklahoma network, A+ Schools, as well as geographic, artistic discipline, racial and ethnic diversity.



This is a critical time for arts education in Oklahoma and stakeholders demonstrated a high degree of readiness to engage in the SP3 initiative.

- Data on access, participation, equity and quality of arts education in Oklahoma is lacking.
- Local control is an important principle of governmental policy in Oklahoma that affects several major education issues currently being considered.
- With the May 2014 repeal of Common Core standards by the state legislature, Oklahoma is exploring alternative policies.
- Interest is high in the local opportunities and challenges presented by passage of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act.
- There is broad criticism of extensive testing and desire to empower local decision making about this.
- Though fine arts assessment for learning in grades 3-8 is mandated at the state level – as are other subject learning assessments - local schools can determine what form assessments will take and thus implementation varies greatly; also, educators in the arts and other subjects are divided on whether mandated assessment affects learning productively.

Initial meetings of the Task Force have focused on envisioning what successful arts education looks like, identifying key issues, and setting a work agenda.

- One desired product is a White Paper that will articulate a vision and priority goals for arts education in Oklahoma.
- Arrangement with a consulting group to facilitate the meetings, research and writing of the White Paper is in progress.
- Models and case studies of the successful and equitable delivery of arts education in a variety of communities would be useful. It has been observed that in order to most accurately frame issues of equity and to identify the most effective policy approaches, the quality of data available needs to be improved.
- An overview of statewide arts education policies useful in an environment emphasizing local control would be useful.
- Key issue areas have been identified and include quality of instruction, assessment and accountability, access and equity.

- Reviewing quality of instruction includes teacher preparation, proper qualification, and support to do the job well.
- A disconnect between school-based arts education and arts activities in the community should be addressed.

Among the most important functions of the Task Force at this early stage are information sharing and the development of a stakeholder network with the relationships capable of achieving goals through united impact. The diverse participants will be able to work together more effectively as they learn about each other's priorities and activities. Further along on the agenda for the Task Force with SP3 Team oversight are partnership building and targeting, message development and creation of media vehicles and events that comprise a communication program.



BACKGROUND

Music education is mandated by Oklahoma's Education Code. One unit or set of competencies of fine arts, such as music, art, or drama, or one unit of speech is mandated for students in a College Preparatory or Work Ready high school curriculum and for students enrolled in another curriculum 2 units or sets of competencies in the arts, which may include, but are not limited to, courses in visual arts and general music are mandated. In 2010, the Kirkpatrick Foundation and Quadrant Arts Education Research published a report on the status of music education in the state of Oklahoma. Findings of the report that cause concern included:

- Band, Choir and Orchestra programs occur less frequently in less affluent communities.
- 49% of public schools do not offer Band.
- 42% of schools do not offer Choir.
- 40% of small high schools offer neither Band or Choir
- Only 24% of elementary schools offer Band. 76% of elementary schools do not offer band.

Recommendations included:

Ongoing Accountability

The state of Oklahoma and its partners in the educational and nonprofit sectors should establish an ongoing quantitative accountability program examining the provision of music courses statewide in order to improve access and availability to more students.

Statewide Arts Education Census

Create a partnership between the State Arts Council, Department of Education, Oklahoma Creativity Project and arts education associations to conduct a complete census of all arts education programs at the individual school level to determine more specific course information, student enrollments, time of instruction, district funding, PTO funding and engagement with community arts resources in order to facilitate equitable student access to music and all of the arts



Elementary Instrumental Program

The state of Oklahoma should encourage instrumental music courses in elementary schools in order for more students to realize the benefits of staying involved with these programs throughout their scholastic years.

State Policies

Conduct a thorough review of state policies to determine what changes may be needed to increase the level of access to music programs and to improve the diversity of course offerings.

Investigate Instructional Alternatives

Explore ways to deliver a diversity of music courses to schools serving smaller student populations. One potential option is to use emerging technologies to increase student access to music programs while ensuring that appropriate educational outcomes are maintained.

For additional information and to participate in Arizona SP3 activities, please contact:

[Amber Sharples, Executive Director](#)
[Oklahoma Arts Council](#)
(405) 521-2853
amber.sharples@arts.ok.gov

[Julia Kirt, Executive Director](#)
[Oklahomans for the Arts](#)
(405) 887-3515
jkirt@oklahomansforthearts.org
<http://www.oklahomansforthearts.org>

Americans for the Arts' State Policy Pilot Program (SP3)

A three-year, 50-state initiative with a 10-state pilot component, the State Policy Pilot Program is meant to influence the implementation of federal mandates and programs around arts education at the state level, expand support for arts education policy and funding, and impact local access to arts programs and instruction for students. Through a set of data collection efforts, state-level capacity building, and the convening of a network for knowledge sharing and collective action, the State Policy Pilot Program will strengthen arts education nationally by improving state policy.

For more information, visit: www.AmericansForTheArts.org/SP3.