



The clock is ticking...

ACT NOW!

Please send your letter to the email contacts listed below by **NO LATER than FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27!**

ISSMA and the Indiana Arts Education Network call on all supporters of music and fine arts in Indiana to take action now!

Indiana State Board of Education is changing diploma requirements that may potentially hurt Music and the Arts.

The Issue: Fewer Indiana students are enrolling in higher education, and even fewer are graduating. The college-going rate has dramatically declined in Indiana as in many other states since the pandemic. This has led to broad support among the Indiana State Legislature for more focus on work-based learning.

The result has been the introduction of updated high school diploma requirements by the Indiana Department of Education. If passed by the State Board, this will create a single General Baseline Diploma with "readiness seals."

The Impact: The proposal eliminates the two-credit fine arts directed elective requirement. Instead, students would choose between subjects like arts, world languages and career skills to fulfill 12 total hours of "personalized electives." However, non-arts courses may be needed for an "Honors Seal" in the seal categories of Enrollment, Employment, or Enlistment, effectively reducing elective options.

This would make Indiana only the second state (after Nevada) to diminish arts as a graduation requirement since it was federally designated a core subject in 1994. Meanwhile other states already have or are adding stand alone arts graduation requirements, since fine arts develop the very interpersonal skills stymied by the pandemic.

Context: IT IS NOT the intent of the State Board of Education to harm arts education. However, the unintended consequences will lead to a reduction in arts education opportunities particularly in very urban and rural school districts.

TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE... YOUR VOICE MUST BE HEARD NOW!

Please write a letter to the members of the State Board of Education (contacts below) using your own experience and story. Include as many of the points below as you would like. We also suggest sharing a letter to the editor with local news outlets.

The Ask:

Please end your email/letters/opinion piece with the following ask:

1. We respectfully ask for a **two-credit hour arts requirement as part of the new General Baseline Diploma** to ensure all Indiana students have the benefits of arts education as part of a well-rounded education.
2. We respectfully ask for the State Board of Education and the Department of Education to **reinforce the IDOE's and SBOE's commitment to the arts as a core subject.**

We are specifically NOT asking to go back to the current 2 credit directed elective and are intentionally asking for a stand alone graduation requirement for ALL students (similar to what exists in many states). This is to highlight the role of the arts across all of the areas of concern (workforce development, career pathways, chronic absenteeism) making the arts worthy of this stand alone requirement.

Please send your letter to the email contacts listed below by NO LATER THAN Friday, September 27!

Remember: Be respectful and positive in your communication. Do not be confrontational or threatening. Focus on the needs of students. We suggest recognizing what the State Board is trying to do for students, while pointing out the need to be aware of and address the unintended consequences.

Messaging Points (choose 3 or 4 to focus on and tell your own story)

1. Arts Education is for ALL Students: Research over the years has shown the important role music and arts education plays in the development of all students regardless of the career pathway they may choose. It provides students with skills that are transferable to other aspects of their development. The proposed requirements, without alteration, may deny some students access to music and arts education.

2. Creativity is an Important Skill for Students: Music and arts education provides students the opportunity to explore their own creativity and discover their own passion for the arts. Creativity is a skill that can be developed and the arts are one of the primary ways to unlock the creative capacity in our students.

3. Music and the Arts are Career Pathways: The proposed new diploma fails to recognize or value music/arts as a career pathway. There are hundreds of career options in music and arts that are available to students. The creative industries in the United States are a \$1 Trillion industry.

4. Music and Arts Education Impact Workforce Development: The number one issue that is coming up across the country and from business leaders in Indiana regarding career readiness is the need for “soft skills” for effective workforce development. These include Communication, Teamwork, Adaptability, Problem-Solving, Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Time Management, Critical Thinking, Work Ethic, and Conflict Resolution. Music and arts education have been recognized for their role in developing these skills. That is why so many successful leaders outside of the music/arts fields credit their involvement in music/arts education as critical to their success in life. A great example of this is Jason Kelce (former Philadelphia Eagles player), who talked passionately about how the skills he learned in music prepared him to be successful in football. There are countless examples of this across industries in the United States.

5. Impact on Cognitive Development: Research consistently shows that music education plays a vital role in enhancing cognitive abilities, improving language skills, and fostering creativity in children.

6. Arts Has a Positive Impact on Chronic Absenteeism: Students involved in four years of arts instruction have up to a 50% lower chronic absenteeism rate than students that are not.

7. Rural Programs will Suffer: Students in smaller communities will be denied opportunities in music and the arts as enrollment in programs decline due to the new diploma requirements.

Remember to include in the ask:

- We respectfully ask for a **two-credit hour arts requirement as part of the new General Baseline Diploma** to ensure all students have the benefits of arts education as part of a well-rounded education for all Indiana Students.
- We respectfully ask for the State Board of Education and the Department of Education to **reinforce the IDOE's and SBOE's commitment to the arts as a core subject.**

What's Next

While the focus right now is on the graduation requirement this is not the end. This is just the beginning. Once the diploma is finalized we will turn our attention to the following:

1. **Work-based Learning:** Work to ensure that students' participation in a co-curricular or extra-curricular activity (marching band, etc.) will fulfill the requirement of 100 hours of work-based learning.
2. **Fine Arts Seal:** Implement a Fine Arts Seal similar to what has been adopted in Florida and Arizona.

Remember, please send your letter/email to the email contacts listed below by NO LATER THAN Friday, September 27!

Please submit letters to the editor in local newspapers as soon as

possible.

[Send letters or emails to:](#)

Indiana Department of Education

webmaster@doe.in.gov

kjenner@doe.in.gov

State Board of Education

publicrecords@sboe.in.gov

edilosa@geoacademies.org

wdurham@pphs.purdue.edu

byronernest10@gmail.com

iris@raisingtheregion.org

ggastineau@hse.k12.in.us

pmapes@hse.k12.in.us

rentschlerke@wccs.k12.in.us

bj.watts@evsck12.com

scottbessindy@gmail.com

[Links to Additional Resources](#)

[Sample IDOE Letter](#)

[Top 10 Workforce Skills](#)

[Proposed Version of New High School Diploma Comparison](#)

[Redesigning the High School Diploma Resources](#)

ISSMA, Inc. | 100 East Thompson Road | Indianapolis, IN 46227 US

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