

**INFORMATIONAL LETTER:
POLICY CODE:**

TO: SUPERINTENDENTS OF SCHOOLS AND PRINCIPALS

FROM: Susan A. Gendron, Commissioner

DATE: April 4, 2008

SUBJECT: Arts Education Statewide Census

The Betterment Fund and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts are supporting the Maine Alliance for Arts Education and the Maine Department of Education on a three-phase project to support arts education throughout the State. I would like your help in this effort. I would appreciate your support in encouraging educators to complete the survey so that the information we receive can be used effectively to help guide arts education.

Phase I: A Census of Art Programs and Participation

In Phase I, Maine arts educators will complete a survey about their programs and their achievements. They will also identify goals for their programs and communities for the coming years. The survey is the result of the work of 300 Maine teachers who reviewed and refined a draft at their October statewide conference, “At the Creative Center: The Arts in Maine Schools.” This will provide a statewide census of programs and practices that can be compared to similar national data from the National Center for Education Statistics.

This month letters will be sent to every dance, music, theatre and visual arts teacher in the State included in the MEDMS system, asking them to complete an online survey. The survey should take about 40 minutes to complete. I would appreciate if you would encourage your arts teachers to complete the online survey by April 22, 2008. The link to the survey can be found at www.maineartseducation.org. The Maine Alliance for Arts Education and the Department will use the survey information to assist in planning state level efforts for the 2008-09 school year. As we implement the *Learning Results*, this information can help guide and focus our efforts as well as the implementation in your school administrative unit.

Additional Data in Phase I

Also in Phase I of the project, volunteer teachers will work with a small but representative set of students collecting ‘learning logs’ in which they document the ways they learn about the arts. In addition, as a community service, students at the University of Southern Maine will be gathering and analyzing data gathered during ten years of the Maine Arts Commission’s Partners in Arts and Learning program. This summer a team of students and arts educators will collaborate to analyze the data. In the fall of 2008, the data will be shared statewide in regional meetings.

This effort represents the collaboration and contributions of every segment of the Maine education system. We will be coming back to you to think about helping us to organize those conversations and harvest the innovative ideas and solutions.

Phase II and III: In-depth Studies

In Phase II, we plan to build on the information in the students' learning logs to conduct more in-depth studies of how different types and sizes of Maine communities create substantial arts learning for their children. We will also examine arts education in the new school units. In Phase III, we are hoping to profile communities in which such work is happening successfully and publish census results in a variety of formats.

Once again, we will need your help. We will be on the lookout for communities that have – or want to build innovative programs. Quite possibly, your community has something to share with others across the State.

Please help us conduct this important work by supporting your arts teachers in encouraging them to go to www.maineartseducation.org to find the link to the online survey. If you have questions please contact Carol Trimble, Executive Director of the Maine Alliance for Arts Education at ctrimble@maineartseducation.org or Argy Nestor, Visual and Performing Arts Specialist at the Department, argy.nestor@maine.gov