



**Kennedy Center and
National School Boards Association Award
*Guilford County Schools Board of Education***

NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

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Question #1

Given the community setting and profile—including the statistics you included in the Quantities Form—please describe what makes the school board and district uniquely positioned to be a strong candidate for the Kennedy Center and NSBA Award, as well as any pertinent challenges the school district has faced in developing and maintaining a comprehensive arts education program for all students.

Guilford County Schools (GCS) is comprised of students representing 105 languages/dialects, 66.6% students of color, 10,733 students requiring special education services, and a poverty rate of 65.1%. The median household income in GCS is \$45,000 but many local communities are well below the poverty line. Since 2010, North Carolina Public Schools have been required to “do more with less.” Per pupil funding has decreased from \$10,015 per student to \$7,235 which is 6.7% below pre-Recession levels adjusted for inflation. The NC General Assembly implemented private school vouchers in the form of taxpayer-funded debit cards preloaded with \$9,000 utilized for educational expenses. In the end, the program will siphon away \$144.8 million annually to fund vouchers. Schools are assigned letter grades representing performance based on 80% test scores and 20% growth as measured by the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS). Assignment of the lowest letter grades significantly correlate with socio-economically disadvantaged schools comprised of a majority of students of color. Implementation of the letter grades further exacerbates the standardized testing culture pervasive in North Carolina schools by creating a hyper-focus on student test preparation in literacy, math, and science. The 2016 budget codified a class size mandate by which the potential still remains where art, music, and PE teachers would be, at best, drastically reduced and, at worst, eliminated completely. Concurrent with the class size mandate, GCS suffered the loss of Equity 3 dollars previously utilized to ensure schools in the most economically disadvantaged areas were provided resources equitable to those schools in more affluent areas.

National trends suggest that since 1985, there has been a long-term pattern of decline in arts participation in schools mostly precipitated by elimination of school-based arts instruction. The hyper-focus on standardized testing linked to public school performance ratings has resulted in many school district leaders and administrators feeling pressured to invest less in the arts given it is a subject not subjected to standardized testing and invest more in literacy, math, and science. Even in light of the hyper-focus on three specific subject areas, the national literacy rate has remain unchanged where 14% of adult Americans demonstrate a below basic literacy level and 29% demonstrate a basic level. Since 1992, math performance has continued to decline. In retrospect, it is apparent the long-term decrease in access to school arts education concurrent with the hyper-focus on literacy and math has not yielded positive results.

In spite of the national trends and impediments presented by the state government, Guilford County Schools (GCS) has continued to invest in arts education and reap benefits. For ten years, GCS has made a more concerted effort to support and invest in arts education programming and for ten years, the graduation rates have continued to climb resulting in the highest level to date in 2017 at 89.8% surpassing

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the state average at 86.5% and up from approximately 80% ten years ago. Arts education enrollment has increased from approximately 70% to 82.1% with 100% of elementary students and 92% of middle school students engaged in a school-based arts program. Of students engaged in All-County arts programming, 99% also enroll in honors, Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses; 97% are also involved in clubs, sports, and other extra-curricular activities, 99% are college-bound, and 100% graduate from high school. GCS arts education data also indicates an exciting trend. Teachers who engage in content-specific professional development in the arts have a 5% better chance of exceeding student growth. Where achievement gaps persist between White students and students of color, arts education programs are experience better results. For every increase of African American or Hispanic students in a GCS arts classroom, a teacher has 12.5% and 33% respectively better odds of exceeding student growth.

While national arts access trends continue their declination, Guilford County Schools (GCS) trends continue to expand. The Summer Arts Institute (SAI) originated in 2010 as a component of the district's strategic plan. The program consisted of one week of accelerated arts instruction in music, theatre arts, dance, and visual art with approximately 200 students enrolled. In 2017, SAI celebrated its eighth season with nearly 2,000 students enrolled in several programs involving 10 weeks of instruction at 27 sites with several programs including *Arts Exploration* for grades 2-4; *Arts Immersion* for grades 5-9; *Stages for Learning* Broadway-style musical production for grades K-12; *Shakespeare in the Park* play production for grades K-adult; *Band and Orchestra Jumpstart* early instrument instruction for grades 5-7; *6 Strings and 88 Keys* piano and guitar instruction for grades 5-9; *Greensboro Project Space (GPS) Art Camps* for grades 5-9; and art and music instruction in reading intervention camps for elementary students. In all, SAI expanded to multiple programs over 10 weeks in 27 different sites.

Guilford County Schools also provides every third, fourth, fifth, and seventh grade student symphony and opera experiences resulting in 22,000 students annually participating in a symphony and opera performance. The symphony also provides in-school ensembles to perform for every elementary school. Additionally, GCS provides artists-in-residence opportunities to each elementary school connected to the social studies curriculum. All-County events consist of band, high school chorus, middle school chorus, elementary chorus, orchestra, jazz band, and dance with approximately 1,100 students involved in advanced ensembles. To help orchestras and bands prepare for the state music performance adjudication (MPA), GCS provides in-school clinicians to prepare students and teachers for the performance.

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Question #2

Describe the distribution of arts expenditures, arts teachers, supplies, and other arts resources among the schools and students in the district, and how decisions are made about which students, grades, and schools have access to arts education. How does the school board address equality of access to the arts for students? Are there assistance programs for interested students who cannot afford fees associated with arts learning?

Guilford County Schools (GCS) is committed to providing access to the arts. All students enrolled in GCS schools may have access to the arts free of charge. The district does not assess fees for participation in any program. The district provides every elementary school access to music and art. The district is committed to ensuring every elementary student participates in art and music each week; therefore, all elementary schedules provide weekly music and art instruction. Three arts magnet elementary schools also provide instruction in dance, theatre arts, strings, and band. At the middle and high school levels, band and orchestra directors are allotted to each traditional school. These formula-based allotments are separate from all other teachers and are not subject to elimination by administrators. In fact, when student enrollments meet required minimums, additional band and orchestra positions are allotted to ensure the programs have the potential to continue growth. GCS middle and high schools provide instruction in band, orchestra, chorus, art, theatre arts, dance, guitar, piano, music theory, recording engineering and other media arts offered through the CTE department. The offerings will vary depending on the school and the needs of the student population. Principals decide whether to offer more arts programming depending on the size and needs of the school. Two middle and two high school arts magnets offer more arts content due to the nature of the school. All district students have the opportunity to apply for admission and audition for any arts magnet school. One specific arts magnet, Weaver Academy, is ranked first in all high schools in North Carolina.

Guilford County Schools (GCS) allocates instructional supply and capital outlay based on weighted student formulas to each school. Individual school arts supplies are primarily provided through these allocations. District-level expenditures include music and supplies for district events such as All-County, symphony and opera trips, artists-in-residence, and other festivals. The district allocates a percentage of Summer Arts Institute funding while the remainder is comprised of grants, partnerships, and student tuitions. SAI provides scholarships for students who demonstrate a financial need. In the eight years of existence for SAI, no student has ever been denied due to financial need. The district also provides transportation to all district-sponsored events at no charge to students as well as substitutes for teachers. In 2017, the school board provided an additional central office based arts supervisor in order to ensure equality of access to the arts for students. Together with the Director of Fine Arts, the Supervisor of Fine Arts assesses teacher quality, programming quality, numbers of programs, opportunity gaps, equitable access to All-County events, instrument and supply needs, professional learning, partnerships, and arts-related data. On September 26, 2017, Guilford County Schools (GCS) was awarded the federal Professional Development in Arts Education grant in order to:

- Improve teacher integrated arts-learning and content knowledge.
- Expand integrated arts-learning opportunities for teachers.
- Increase integrated arts-learning opportunities for students.

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- Increase partner and community engagement in integrated arts-learning.

The goal of the program is to create an arts integration academy in order to increase arts education opportunities and improve academic outcomes for students who are disadvantaged, disabled and/or underrepresented. The GCS Arts Integration Academy will involve 18 schools, 90 teachers, more than 10,000 students and approximately 150 community partners. GCS was one of only 20 awardees out of 70 nationally and the only awardee in the state of North Carolina

Question #3

How does the school board demonstrate support for arts-based professional development opportunities for classroom teachers and arts specialists?

Guilford County Schools (GCS) Board of Education hired the Director of Fine Arts in July 2008. One aspect of the job responsibilities of that position was to provide high quality professional learning opportunities for arts educators. In 2017, the board of education hired an additional position, the Supervisor of Fine Arts, to expand those opportunities. Over the past ten years, the number of professional learning opportunities for arts educators has increased exponentially from approximately four per year per content area (nine total) to now eight per year, per content area. In addition, the district arts office provides professional learning with high quality clinicians at all All-County events. To manage the multiple professional learning opportunities and to ensure authentic, content- and curricular-aligned professional learning, the district arts office installed lead teachers in each of the nine main content areas. Lead teachers work in concert with the district office to assess professional needs and survey teachers in order to provide the best quality opportunities available. Given the district's close proximity to several institutes of higher education and vast network of community partnerships, lead teachers are often able to involve collaborators and presenters from professional and civic organizations.

In 2017, the district arts office will implement the *Lyceum*. The *Lyceum* is designed to be a clearinghouse for arts-related research and development. Much like TED talks, the *Lyceum* will provide district teachers, professional organizations, and professionals in institutes of higher education to present recent research, trends, and goals to contribute to the overall development of arts data. The department will record and house each session on the district arts YouTube channel. The *Lyceum* will also include opportunities for local performers and artists to visit schools and offer high quality exhibitions for students. Future plans for the *Lyceum* include offering private and group lessons in music, art, theatre, and dance for students during the regular school day. Research and data generated from the *Lyceum* will provide the district arts office and board of education critical information on the overall educational needs of students and the significance of the arts on student cognitive processes.

As a component of the Guilford County Schools (GCS) Arts Integration Academy, teachers, both arts and non-arts, will engage in learning methods and techniques for integrating their curriculum with the arts in

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order to improve student learning particularly in schools presenting the highest need. GCS will partner with the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to design and implement an online learning course to provide educators with the basics of arts integration. Those educators will then engage in face-to-face learning to further develop skills whereby they can confidently and authentically incorporate arts into their curriculum. The Academy will also provide opportunities for administrators to hone their artistic skills as well.

Question #4

List any partnerships or collaborations the school board has developed with cultural institutions and community arts resources, including, but not limited to artist residencies, field trips, professional development opportunities for teachers, etc. For each partnership, include how the board works with the partnering organization, how long the partnership relationship has existed, and describe the board's financial commitment to the partnership.

Guilford County Schools (GCS) Board of Education has established a vast network of partners through the Office of Fine Arts. The partnerships developed and their purpose include:

- Moore Music Company – Moore Music works with GCS to facilitate the Band and Orchestra Jumpstart, a component of the Summer Arts Institute. Interested students have the opportunity to enroll directly into the program at the regular tuition or scholarship or they can gain free admission to the program with an instrument rental. The company has also provided up to 60 instruments for student use in the Summer Arts Institute at no charge, registration for and a travel stipend to the Conn-Selmer Institute for band directors, financial assistance for the beginning professional development day for all arts educators, 20% off all purchases for Guilford County Schools, a performance space for schools, and presenters for professional learning opportunities. While there exists no direct financial obligation for the Board of Education, the district has purchased instruments and all music purchases for All-County events each year. The district also provides Moore Music the opportunity to visit schools, speak at meetings, and promote their services.
- Greensboro Symphony – For 40 years, the Greensboro Symphony has worked with the district to provide symphony learning trips for students in third, fourth, and seventh grades; in-school ensemble visits to each elementary school; curriculum to support the symphony trips and in-school visits; and opportunities for high school orchestras to open for the symphony at regular concerts. Additionally, the Symphony partners with UNC Greensboro and GCS to provide strings instruction in two underserved, Title I elementary schools. The GCS Board of Education provides \$54,000 to the Symphony annually and \$25,000 in transportation costs.
- Greensboro Opera – Greensboro Opera works with the district to provide field trips to an opera performance for every fifth grade student in the district. In addition, the opera sponsors a “Write Your Own Opera” contest for fourth grade students whereby the winning story is transformed into a libretto and a musical score is composed by UNC Greensboro professors. The GCS Board of Education provides \$7,600 to Greensboro Opera annually and

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- \$12,000 in transportation costs.
- Green Hill Center for NC Art – Green Hill provides visual artists-in-residence for elementary schools connecting the visual art curriculum to social studies. The GCS BOE provides \$20,000 annually.
 - Institutes of Higher Education – UNC Greensboro, NC A&T State University, Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC), and Greensboro College provide presenters for professional learning opportunities. NC A&T State University in conjunction with Triad Stage also hosts the August Wilson Monologues for student competition and provides a trip to New York City for the national festival. GTCC provides space for student performances. There is no specific dollar contribution from the board of education; however, IHEs are encouraged to recruit students to their university arts programs.
 - Greensboro Project Space (GPS) – GPS hosts four weeks of visual art camps through the Summer Arts Institute. The financial obligation for the board of education depends on the number of students enrolled. In 2017, it was \$4,800.
 - The Music Academy of North Carolina (MANC) – MANC provides piano accompanists for All-County Choral events. MANC will also be involved in providing private and group lessons for students through the Lyceum. The financial obligation is \$300 per year.
 - The City of Greensboro – Greensboro operates arts programming. The Drama Center partners with GCS on the Shakespeare in the Park program providing costumes, sets, props, and the outdoor amphitheater. Together, the Drama Center and GCS has produced *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Henry IV*, and *The Tempest*. The City also allows GCS arts education to utilize space in the Greensboro Cultural Center free of charge. There is no financial obligation other than the district allowing the City to utilize space and equipment free of charge in return. The Music Center provides afterschool ensemble opportunities for teacher professional development and extended learning for students.
 - Big Note Music Company – BNM repairs all band and orchestra instruments for the district for a reduced rate. The board provides \$50,000 annually for the service.
 - Community Theater of Greensboro – CTG partners with GCS to produce Stages for Learning – the Broadway-style musical component of the Summer Arts Institute. CTG provides personnel, performance space at Starr Theater, props, and costuming. GCS provides \$5,000 for scripts and rights. Together, GCS and CTG has produced *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, *The Little Mermaid*, *The Music Man*, *Godspell*, *Hairspray*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *James and the Giant Peach*, and *Seussical*.
 - Piedmont Triad International Airport – PTIA is providing a 1,500 square foot space for a public art installation. They will also provide an art gallery space for the 2017 Superintendent’s Choice Art Awards and Reception.
 - Irving Park Art and Frame – provides display space and an evening reception for teacher art displays.
 - Carousel Theatre for Young People – provides theatrical performances free of charge for third grade students and at a reduced cost for all other elementary students. GCS provides \$12,000 for transportation.
 - ArtsGreensboro and High Point Area Arts Council – AG and HPAAC are the arts councils for

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both the Greensboro and High Point metro areas. Each organization provides grants specifically for GCS teachers. GCS allows workplace giving campaigns to be conducted in the schools. Each organization also provides meeting and performance space at no charge.

- Weatherspoon Art Museum – provides meeting spaces for visual art teacher professional learning, provides specific professional learning opportunities for visual art and non-arts teachers, and provides an education director to work with the GCS Fine Arts Department. There is no specific financial obligation.
- National Folk Festival – The NFF resided in Greensboro, NC from 2015-2017. A part of the festivities included world-renowned artists performing in the schools just prior to the festival. AT&T of NC provided a \$25,000 grant to fund the venture. GCS board of education provided space and sound equipment for performances.
- Shared Radiance Company – provides in-school theatrical performances particularly focusing on Title I schools. This venture is funded by ArtsGreensboro. There is no financial obligation other than the time to partner on the grant writing.
- Triad Stage – provides professional learning opportunities for teachers, 50% ticket prices for GCS employees, and has hired an education director to work with the Department of Fine Arts in joint ventures.
- Greensboro Ballet – provides in-school workshops for students and teachers funded by a grant from ArtsGreensboro. There is no financial obligation other than the time to partner on grant writing.
- New Beginnings Video – records and produces DVDs of All-County events. There is no financial obligation other than electricity; however, a portion of the proceeds is returned to GCS Arts Education.
- North Carolina Museum of Art – provides professional learning opportunities for teachers at no cost.
- Steinway Piano Gallery – provides professional learning opportunities for teachers at no cost as well as assists in planning initiatives for purchasing pianos.
- High Point Community Foundation – supports arts programs in the metro High Point area through fundraising and granting opportunities.
- The Enrichment Fund – supports scholarships for students to attend the Summer Arts Institute.
- Kona Ice – provides reduced rate snow cones for teachers attending August professional learning opportunities
- Kneaded Energy – a massage school in the Greensboro area that provides massages for teachers attending the August professional learning day.
- The Artist Bloc – provides low-cost visual art supplies for visual art teachers
- Music & Arts – provides funding for the GCS Orchestra Festival
- High Point Theatre – provides theatre and gallery space at drastically reduced cost. Typically, the cost incurred is \$1,200 for an event.
- Center for Visual Artists – provides professional learning opportunities for teachers.
- Forge Greensboro – provides low-cost memberships for their maker-space.

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Question #5

List how the school board has actively contributed to the development of arts education within the school district, including policy development; long range plans for arts education; and increasing funding for the arts as well as securing grants to support arts programs. Please provide specific examples.

Guilford County Schools (GCS) Board of Education has actively contributed to the development of arts education throughout the school district in multiple ways including policy development, funding, supporting long-range plans, and securing grants.

A. Policy Development

Managing large numbers of students in honors ensembles can be difficult at best; however, the task becomes impossible when codified plans dedicated to these processes do not exist. Such was the case for the district events such as All-County in Guilford County Schools (GCS). The GCS Board of Education supported the development and implementation of the All-County Auditions and Clinic Handbook (attached) in 2012 to codify processes for distribution to parents, students, and faculty. The handbook outlines the responsibilities of each party when auditioning and participating in district-wide events including expectations, rubrics, adjudication procedures, and teacher responsibilities and processes. The handbook has resulted in a more streamlined process for stakeholders as well as protected the fidelity of the auditions process.

Booster organizations are critical to the proper functioning of sports and arts programs in any school district. In most cases, boosters operate separate from the school treasury system and maintain a certain level of authority when fundraising and disbursing funds. Within a large school system, multiple boosters operating simultaneously can often result in a cacophony of funding requests both at the school and district level. Furthermore, some improvements requested by boosters may result in violations of district protocols, procedures, and policies (i.e., capital improvements to facilities, motor vehicle purchases, etc.). It then becomes imperative for boosters to operate within specific guidelines to ensure procedures are provided proper oversight and guidance. The GCS Board of Education recognized the need to improve booster relations and ensure fundraising ventures and goals met district approval and did not conflict. As a result, the board designed and implemented specific booster procedures whereby such parent organizations may function within the guidelines and procedures of the board while capitalizing efforts as best as possible.

As described earlier, the state mandated class-size reductions presented an extreme situation. In essence, the state withdrew the flexibility with which school districts allocated positions for music, art, and PE positions at the elementary level. Given the critical need for keeping elementary music, art, and PE teachers, the effect would have affected middle and high school as well possibly resulting in elimination of those positions to cover elementary needs. House bill (HB) 13 was presented in the NC General Assembly as a means to provide relief from the onerous senate budget bill 1030 where the original legislation to reduce class sizes existed. While HB 13 ultimately failed, the senate and house compromised providing temporary relief for one year until a plan to fully fund elementary specialist positions was crafted. While many elementary music, art, and PE teachers faced uncertainty at the end of the 2016-17 academic calendar, the GCS Board of Education made a public stand with a resolution designed to call upon the NC General Assembly to rectify the situation it caused. This resolution further solidified the commitment to

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arts education made by the GCS Board of Education.

B. Funding

Guilford County Schools (GCS) Board of Education is among the most supportive school boards in the state of NC. The GCS Board of Education is committed to providing world-class arts experiences both in the classroom and outside the classroom. One way the board demonstrates its commitment to world-class arts education in the classroom is by ensuring world-class educators serve students. GCS is the fifth highest paying school district in the state. In addition to this, GCS provides arts educators with co-curricular supplements for the work performed outside the regular school day. Band directors also receive an eleventh month of salary for their work with marching bands. To ensure the best and brightest are hired for arts education classrooms, the Department of Fine Arts is directly involved in screening candidates for vacancies. The department challenges candidates with tasks and questions directly related to their arts-specific content.

Guilford County Schools (GCS) is among the few school districts in the state and region that provide students with a symphony, opera, and artists-in-residence experience. Funding for these opportunities has remained in the budget for nearly four decades. While many of these line items are among the first to be eliminated from most school district budgets, the GCS Board of Education continues to demonstrate its commitment to world-class arts education.

C. Supporting Long-Range Plans

The Summer Arts Institute, established in 2010, has been among the most widely supported of the arts programming in Guilford County Schools (GCS). However, the Board of Education has also expressed its concern with and support of long-range planning in all areas of the arts. Evidence of this support is the recent board presentation on the state of the arts in GCS provided by the Department of Fine Arts. This presentation outlined the growth of the arts within the past three years but also reflected some of the immense growth over the past ten years. Inherent in the presentation was a glimpse of the Arts Master Plan detailed later in this document. The board's concern with the arts, evidenced by its inclusion in a board meeting, is the first presentation provided by a content area department since the reorganization of 2017.

D. Securing Grants

The Guilford County Schools (GCS) Board of Education is deeply involved in securing grants for the school district in all areas of education including the arts. The Office of Grants and Opportunities is evidence of the board's commitment to providing resources for funding opportunities outside the general tax-based funding streams. The Office of Grants and Opportunities keeps all interested parties, both classroom- and district-based, current on grant-supported funding opportunities. The Board of Education provides guidance on grant proposals via policies. Anyone interested in pursuing larger grant opportunities must present those proposals to the GCS Board of Education for approval.

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Question #6

Are the arts included in the district's strategic plan or mission statement? Please paste the text of the mission statement below.

From 2008 to 2012 and again from 2012 to 2016, strategic plans governed the work of Guilford County Schools (GCS). Under the direction of Dr. Sharon Contreras, the district is working to develop the next iteration of the strategic plan that will shepherd the future work of the district. Currently, the district has developed the *Guide for Transformational Teaching and Learning* (attached) designed to ensure core beliefs match with the instructional framework and grounded in curriculum. Both Strategic Plans 2012 and 2016 are linked for further review.

Guilford County Schools (GCS) mission statement is, "Guilford County students will graduate as responsible citizens prepared to succeed in high education or in the career of their choice." The vision is, "Achieving educational excellence." GCS Department of Fine Arts' mission statement is, "Every Guilford County Schools student will have access to a world-class arts education experience and graduate with skills whereby he or she may be lifelong arts learners or appreciators." The vision is, "Opportunity for all."

Guilford County Schools (GCS) Department of Fine Arts operates according to the *Arts Master Plan 2022* (attached). The master plan was developed in multiple stages.

- A series of summer committee meetings with arts educators resulted in a basic framework with overarching goals necessary to make GCS Department of Fine Arts a national leader in arts education
 - The committee reviewed several existing master plans to ascertain basic information about developing a similar plan.
 - The committee identified five main categories whereby goals would be developed
 - Policy: *Create and improve district policies to better support education of the whole child and ensure access to a robust and world-class arts education*
 - Professional Development: *Ensure arts educators are provided relevant, authentic, and current professional development while establishing arts-specific training opportunities for non-arts educators and administrators*
 - Community Engagement: *Expand opportunities to further engage families, community, businesses, and other local, state, and national organizations in the district arts education program*
 - Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: *Create a robust curriculum delivery system of aligned instructional goals to district goals and well-defined assessment protocols for students and arts educators*
 - Data-driven Decision-making: *Provide an environment whereby arts educators are comfortable utilizing data, both qualitative and quantitative, to make informed*

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decisions regarding student learning in the arts

- The findings and work of the committee were presented to all arts educators in a joint meeting.
- The Department of Fine Arts conducted surveys of all stakeholders to receive input on aims, goals, and objectives
- The Department of Fine Arts researched current trends in arts education and incorporated those into the development of the plan
- All teachers contributed to objective development via monthly professional learning sessions