

Memorandum

Date: July 11, 2025

To: PELSB Board Members

From: Alina Campana, Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), and Max Clark-Vail, Perpich Center for Arts Education – Debby Odell, Licensing and Operations Manager

Re: Arts Licensing Update

Background

Overview

The purpose of the memo is to support the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board as it considers changes to the structure of licenses and standards governing arts teachers, which have not been updated since 2001. In advance of rulemaking, Perpich and MDE are working with external partners to develop arts licensure rule recommendations that PELSB could adopt. We have assembled a Steering Committee to review structural concerns with arts licensure and they have made their recommendations. We would like the PELSB Board to review these recommendations and give approval before beginning further work that will be dependent upon these recommendations.

K-12 arts education requirements in Minnesota

Minnesota's academic standards set the expectations for achievement in the arts for K-12 students in Minnesota in 5 arts areas named in MN Statute 120B.021:

- Dance
- Media arts
- Music
- Theater
- Visual arts

To meet graduation requirements in Minnesota, all students must receive instruction in the arts and complete arts education coursework (though, there are no state assessments for the arts content areas).¹ Minnesota law also sets minimum requirements for the number of arts areas offered and required in public schools. Elementary and middle schools must offer at least three arts areas, and require at least two of the arts areas, selecting from dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts. High schools must offer at least three, and require at least one of the arts areas, selecting from dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts. In addition, students must

¹ Minn. Stat. § 120B.02, subd. 2.

take one credit of the arts in high school to graduate. One credit is the equivalent of one year of study. That credit must be “sufficient to satisfy” all standards and benchmarks in an arts area at the high school level.² A student may also take a career and technical education course to fulfill an arts credit when certain requirements have been met.³

Minnesota currently has the following K-12 Arts Licenses:

- Dance
- Dance & Theater
- Instrumental and Classroom Music
- Theater
- Visual Arts
- Vocal and Classroom Music

Rulemaking Pre-preparation: Supporting State Agencies

In 2024, Perpich Center and Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) offered to assist in preparing for rulemaking in the arts.

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) is responsible for setting the K-12 academic standards for the following arts areas: (1) dance, (2) music, (3) theater, (4) media arts, and (5) visual arts.⁴

The Perpich Center for Arts Education was created by the state legislature in 1985 with the purpose of meeting the needs of Minnesota students interested in creative and interpretive arts. The Perpich Center for Arts Education consists of the Arts High School, the Professional Development and Resource Program (PDR), and the Arts Education Library. The Professional Development and Resource Program provides professional development opportunities statewide to teachers and teaching artists in the K-12 system.

Arts Licensing and Standards Revision Process (Pre-Rulemaking)

The pre-rulemaking process has been divided into two phases.

PHASE 1: Steering Committee reviewed structural issues and possible solutions (July 2024 - June 2025)

During this phase, the steering committee met monthly to review issues and potential solutions while thoroughly discussing pros and cons for each option. The steering committee drafted a set of recommendations (contained in this memo), which we are presenting to PELSB before moving on to the next phase.

PHASE 2: Writing Workgroups to develop draft rule recommendations (tentatively November 2025 - June 2026)

This phase begins after PELSB has reviewed the recommendations of the Steering Committee. During this phase, workgroups will be formed for each set of licensure standards to review current standards (if they exist) and to draft recommended standards to be presented to PELSB.

² Minn. Stat. § 120B.024, subd. 1(6).

³ Minn. Stat § 120B.024, subd. 2(c).

⁴ [Minnesota Department of Education K-12 Academic Standards in the Arts webpage](https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/stds/Arts/), <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/stds/Arts/>; and [Minnesota Rules, Chapters 3501.0800-3501.0815](https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/stds/Arts/).

Arts Licensing & Standards Steering Committee Composition

In collaboration between MDE and Perpich Center for Arts Education, and in close consultation with PELSB staff, a steering committee was established to offer guidance on any structural changes needed before the review and revision of existing licensure standards in the arts.

All five arts areas for which we have MN K-12 Academic Arts Standards (dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts) are represented on the Steering Committee. Additionally, the following areas of expertise are included:

- Arts education faculty in higher education
- K-12 administrators (both district and school level)
- K-12 arts educators

The committee included:

- Rebecca Bullen: Principal, Perpich Center for Arts Education, former Media Arts chair
- Adrian Davis: District Performing Arts Coordinator, Saint Paul Public Schools and Professor of Music Education, University of Minnesota
- Aaron Lohmeyer: Professor of Music Education and Jazz Band Director, Winona State University
- Betsy Maloney-Leaf: Arts Education Professor and Program Lead, University of Minnesota
- Alicia Peters: Art Education Professor, Saint Benedict/Saint John's University

The committee met for a total of 10 meetings between July 2024 and June 2025. Members did an in-depth analysis of core structural issues and continued to discuss each item until coming to a unanimous consensus on recommendations for each item.

Steering Committee Recommendations & Rationale

The Steering Committee discussed three main topics: media arts, music, and the dance and theater combined license. After extensive deliberation, the committee came to agreement on these recommendations:

1. Create a PK-12 Media Arts License
2. Discontinue the PK-12 Vocal and Classroom Music and the PK-12 Instrumental and Classroom Music licenses and replace them with a single PK-12 Music license
3. Retain the PK-12 Dance & Theater license alongside the PK-12 Dance license and PK-12 Theater license

For each issue, the committee was tasked with thoroughly discussing the pros and cons of each option. These conversations were documented to record the rationale behind each decision. These documents have been appended to this memorandum, see "Media Arts Pros & Cons," "Music Pros & Cons," and "Dance & Theater Pros & Cons." In the following sections, more information is provided about each of the committee's recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Create a PK-12 Media Arts License

The issue: Minnesota has had academic standards for Media Arts since 2004. Since then, media arts has been predominantly taught by visual arts-licensed teachers, but no existing license contains standards that adequately

ensure an educator is prepared to teach media arts. Appropriate teacher assignment is determined on a course-by-course basis across the existing arts licenses.

In the [Glossary for the 2018 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in the Arts](#), Media Arts has this definition: “The media arts include cinematic arts (film/video), animation, imaging, sound design, graphic design, virtual design, interactive design, as well as multimedia and intermedia.” Further detail about media arts is included under the definition of “Foundations” for media arts: “...These can include elements of media arts, artistic and technical skills with a variety of hardware and software, artistic vocabulary, media literacy skills, and aesthetic choices. Elements of media arts include image, sound, space, motion, time and sequence. By creating, presenting, responding and connecting using foundations, students engage in artistic literacy. Media arts foundations allow students to understand and respond to visual media/messages, and think critically about bias, perspective and intent. Media arts foundations prepare students to effectively participate and engage with visual media environments. Lastly, media arts foundations grant students the necessary fluencies to read/decode media art works, as well as to create/encode new original stories that are executed in a range of media arts formats and genres (such as cinema, animation, gaming, virtual/augmented reality, etc.)”

Rationale: Media arts is a distinct arts area with its own K-12 academic standards. While it has interdisciplinary connections to the other arts areas, specific skills are needed for quality media arts instruction and a new license will allow this growing area to be fully supported by qualified media arts educators.

The committee considered the following options:

1. No Change
2. Embed Media Arts licensure standards into Visual Arts licensure standards
3. Embed Media Arts licensure standards into all arts licensure standards
4. Create a PK-12 Media Arts License with its own set of Media Arts licensure standards
5. Create a Media Arts endorsement

Areas of impact the steering committee considered:

- Media arts as an arts area
- The other arts areas
- Teacher prep programs/pathways to licensure
- Current teachers teaching media arts (arts specialists, elementary generalists, CTE teachers)
- Districts and schools hiring, scheduling, systems
- Teacher candidates (shortage, employability)

For an in-depth review of the committee’s pros & cons discussion see “Media Arts Pros & Cons.”

Recommendation #2: Discontinue the K-12 Vocal and Classroom Music and the K-12 Instrumental and Classroom Music licenses and replace them with a single PK-12 Music license

The issue: K-12 music education does not fully represent the prevalent ways society engages with and makes music. To keep music education relevant and in line with contemporary career opportunities in music, music

educators need knowledge and skills in areas such as popular music, recording arts, and music production/technology, and related pedagogical approaches.

Additionally, the current structure is built around the musical traditions of band and orchestra (instrumental), and choir (vocal), creating barriers to becoming an educator for the many musicians who are not from one of these specific niche musical backgrounds. It also creates barriers to offering music learning in K-12 schools that would prepare students for the range of musical careers relevant today.

Rationale: Creating an all-inclusive PK-12 Music license asks music educators to broaden their knowledge and experience while still valuing and expecting some level of specialization. It also positions a wider variety of musical traditions as equally valuable to PK-12 music education.

The committee considered the following options:

1. No change
2. Change through standards revision
3. Create an endorsement requiring a Music license
4. Create an endorsement requiring a Music license or Media Arts pathway
5. Eliminate the current Music licenses and create a PK-12 Music license as well as three endorsements: Instrumental, Vocal, and Music Production and Recording Arts
6. Eliminate the current Music licenses and create a PK-12 Music license as well as two endorsements: Instrumental, and Vocal.
7. Maintain the current Music licenses and add a third, PK-12 Music Production & Recording Arts.
8. Eliminate the current Music licenses and create a PK-12 Music license that is all-encompassing.

Recommendation #3: Retain the K-12 Dance & Theater license alongside the K-12 Dance license and K-12 Theater license

The Issue: Because there is currently a Dance license, a Theater license, and a Dance and Theater license, the committee considered whether the combination license could be discontinued.

Rationale: The committee determined that it could be useful to avoid removing any opportunities for new teacher preparation programs to be created for dance and theater teachers when there is only 1 currently in existence.

The committee considered the following options:

1. No change
2. Eliminate the Dance & Theater combination license

For an in-depth review of the committee's pros & cons discussion see "Dance and Theater Pros & Cons."

Next Steps

With approval of the steering committee recommendations from the PELSB board, Perpich Center and MDE will open applications for writing workgroups. Writing workgroups will review existing licensure standards in the arts

(where they exist) and draft recommendations for revised or new standards to present to PELSB for adoption for rulemaking. This process is tentatively planned for November 2025-June 2026.

Writing workgroups will be created for each arts license. If PELSB accepts the recommendations of the Steering Committee, this would include the following six set of standards:

- Dance
- Dance & Theater
- Media arts
- Music
- Theater
- Visual Arts

Upon completion of these drafts, and with opportunity for public feedback along the way, the recommended draft rule will be submitted to the PELSB Board for review and consideration. This is tentatively planned for the summer of 2026.

This schedule is designed in anticipation of PELSB's rulemaking for the arts slotted to begin in FY27 (as early as July 2026) and continuing in FY28.

Request

This is a report. We are seeking PELSB Board approval in July 2025 to move forward with Steering Committee Recommendations:

- Create a K-12 Media Arts License
- Discontinue the K-12 Vocal and Classroom Music and the K-12 Instrumental and Classroom Music licenses and replace them with a single K-12 Music license
- Retain the K-12 Dance & Theater license alongside the K-12 Dance license and K-12 Theater license

Follow up: The Arts Committee has agreed to follow the Boards recommendation from the June meeting and will be seeking feedback from arts educators, administrators and arts education groups.