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Memorandum

Date: November 21, 2025

To: PELSB Board Members

From: Max Clark-Vail, Perpich Center for Arts Education and Alina Campana, Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)

Re: Arts Licensing Update and Survey Results

Background

Steering Committee Recommendations Review

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

1. Create a PK-12 Media Arts License with some overlapping standards among other arts areas
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 with specialization embedded in the standards
3. Retain the PK-12 Dance & Theater license alongside the PK-12 Dance license and PK-12 Theater license

Please see the [Arts Licensing Update - Memorandum \(Report\)](#) from the August 15, 2025 PELSB Board meeting for more information.

Surveying the Field

At the August 15, 2025 PELSB Board meeting, the board requested that MDE and Perpich conduct a survey to gather feedback on the steering committee recommendations from K-12 teachers, administrators, and higher education faculty.

A separate survey for each recommendation was developed using the same structure, asking respondents:

- which resources they reviewed in advance of responding,
- whether or not they supported the recommendation,
- to share potential drawbacks and benefits of the recommendation,
- and for respondent demographic information.

The surveys are attached along with responses.

Survey Recipients and Responses

A mailing list was developed including lists from PELSB, Perpich Center, and MDE. This list included approximately 13,000 contacts:

- All arts licensed teachers
- Actively assigned teachers in the arts and in CTE courses which may fall under the category of Media Arts
- District and school administrators
- Curriculum leads
- Higher education unit leads and arts education faculty
- Arts Education Organizations
- Relevant arts organizations

The survey was open from September 15th to October 19th. Emails were sent at the time of the survey opening, and a reminder message on October 13th. We received a total of 311 responses across all three surveys. More detailed information about numbers of responses can be found below.

Informational Sessions

Perpich and MDE offered 13 virtual informational sessions regarding the proposed recommendations. 6 focused on the music recommendation, 3 on the media arts recommendation, 3 on the dance/theater recommendation, and 1 addressed all three. Approximately 120 participants engaged with us in these sessions, learning more about the process, the recommendations themselves, and next steps.

Survey Analysis and Caveats

Perpich and MDE collaboratively analyzed the survey data, employing human review assisted by AI review with two tools: Claude and Copilot. The two AI tools were used to check for human bias and to cross check for accuracy. In each review, it was determined that the pros and cons raised in the survey results had also been considered and addressed by the Steering Committee.

We invite the board to keep the following caveats in mind as they interpret the survey results:

- **Self-selection:** People with stronger opinions may have been more likely to respond.
- **Gaps in representation:** Disseminating the survey was biased towards those already in the K-12 public education system, making it more difficult to get responses from outside the system. For example, for the music recommendation, one of the primary pros for the recommendation identified by the steering committee was that it could reduce barriers to licensure to those musicians who have been historically excluded. The survey results are not representational of those very people.
- **Small subgroups:** Some groups and subgroups of respondents are very small, so percentages and assigning representation should be interpreted cautiously.

Media Arts Survey

Recommendation: Create a PK-12 Media Arts License with some overlapping standards among other arts areas

Summary of Support & Opposition

- 64 total responses
- Yes: 31 (48%)
- Unsure: 17 (27%)
- No: 16 (25%)

Respondent roles

- 35 Licensed K-12 Visual Arts Teachers
- 7 Higher Education Faculty or Staff
- 5 District or School Building Administrators
- 8 Other licensed educators or professionals
- 7 teaching or working artists
- 1 Parent or Guardian of a current K-12 Student
- 1 Other

Key Take-aways

- Nearly half of respondents support the recommendation: 31 support the recommendation, 17 are unsure, and 16 oppose it.
- Visual arts teachers show the widest range of opinion (18 yes, 10 unsure, 7 no), while higher education faculty lean supportive (5 yes, 2 unsure).

Themes in Responses

Key themes identified in the survey responses are:

Benefits	Concerns
A need for qualified teachers in media arts	Over-specialization and teacher shortages
Legitimacy for the arts area	Implementation barriers, including needing to establish higher education programs
21st Century Relevance	
Career Pathways & Opportunities	

Major Themes in Opposition/Concerns - Media Arts

Over-Specialization and Teacher Shortages Many respondents worry that creating another specialized license will worsen staffing problems, particularly in rural and small districts. There is concern that additional licensure requirements could exacerbate these shortages and make hiring more difficult.

Current Visual Arts Teachers Teaching Media Arts A significant concern involves the many visual arts teachers already successfully teaching media arts who would suddenly need additional licensure. Respondents question whether these teachers would be grandfathered in or face burdensome requirements to add credentials. *A plan to address this issue has been discussed with PELSB staff, though details have not yet been determined.*

Implementation Barriers Multiple concerns about practical obstacles: lack of higher education programs to prepare teachers, cost of technology and software, limited courses available for teachers seeking the license, and the burden of additional schooling for already-low teacher salaries.

Major Themes in Support/Benefits - Media Arts

Need for Qualified Teachers There is broad agreement that students benefit from having teachers who are properly trained and licensed in media arts. Supporters emphasize that licensure would ensure qualified instruction and prevent situations where unqualified staff teach media arts classes. Several cite examples of librarians, untrained teachers, or community experts teaching media arts poorly without meeting academic standards.

21st Century Relevance Many see media arts as essential for modern education, preparing students for careers in an increasingly digital world. They note growing job opportunities in areas like video production, graphic design, and content creation.

Legitimacy for the Field Having a dedicated license would recognize media arts as a distinct discipline rather than treating it as subordinate to visual arts or tech education. This could elevate the field's status and attract more resources.

Career Pathways Several respondents see opportunities for dual licensure helping teacher employability, creating clearer job roles, and attracting people from media professions into teaching.

Sample Responses - Media Arts

"I worry about too much specialization in teacher licenses. As we look at the teacher shortage and how to best staff classrooms and provide future students with a license that was adapt as thing change in education, I believe it's important we allow flexibility and broadness in our teacher licenses..."

School Building Administrator, Suburban

"This may make offering this elective opportunity even more challenging for rural districts. There is so much overlap with many disciplines, I would hate to see this pigeonholed!"

District Administrator, Rural

"I think a license is vitally important. Our district continues to have "just about anyone" teach Media Arts, specifically at our alternative learning sites. We need to, just like any other content, have certified

teachers who are meeting the state standards. While it would potentially make filling rolls tougher in those areas, it could also help with hiring. Whereas now we cannot fill the .4 art position at our main school, if we could add the Media Arts at ALC FTEs, we could make a more full-time position and solve both problems.”

Licensed K-12 Visual Arts Teacher, Suburban

“A media art license would ensure 21st century ways of seeing the world and would provide students with ways of understanding how multiple technologies and disciplines can converge in a multi sensory experience. However, I do not think it should be rigidly removed from the visual art license - there is more overlap than not.”

Licensed K-12 Visual Arts Teacher, City

“The recommendation would give students more chances to explore Media Arts and prepare for future careers in technology and design. It would also create clear standards so schools can hire teachers who are trained in this area. Colleges could build new programs or dual licenses, which could open more pathways for teacher candidates. Districts would benefit from having teachers with the right training, which helps strengthen arts programs overall.”

Higher Education Faculty, Rural

“Media Arts licensure will quench the thirst of many college students who come through our programs at MSUM yearly, but see no teaching path ahead. Institutions that have planned for this all along will meet the needs of current teachers who desire to upgrade, earn credentials, or be certified...The licensure will also position Minnesota as a leader in media arts education in the country.”

Higher Education Faculty, City

Music Survey

Recommendation: 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 with specialization embedded in the standards.

Summary Table of Support/Opposition

This table includes response percentage and numbers for the total respondents to the music survey, as well as a break-down of some of the sub-groups that showed the most deviation from the total response percentages.

Group	% Does Not Support	% Supports	% Unsure
All Respondents (224)	59% (132)	19% (42)	22% (50)
K-12 Music Teachers (183)	66% (121)	11% (21)	22% (41)
Everyone who is not a K-12 Music Teacher (41)	27% (11)	51% (21)	22% (9)
Small Schools (13)	54% (7)	31% (4)	16% (2)
Mid-sized Schools (108)	62% (67)	13% (14)	25% (27)
Large Schools (69)	71% (49)	10% (7)	19% (13)

Respondent Roles

- 183 Licensed K-12 Visual Arts Teachers
- 10 Higher Education Faculty or Staff
- 10 District or School Building Administrators
- 5 Other licensed educators or professionals
- 7 teaching or working musicians
- 1 Parent or Guardian of a current K-12 Student
- 3 Other Education Professional (non-licensed)
- 5 Other

Key Take-aways

- There is resistance to a single, broad license, especially among current K-12 music teachers. Opposition is strongest among current K-12 music teachers, especially in medium/large schools and rural/suburban areas.

- Some see benefits for staffing flexibility and modernization, but most want to preserve distinct specializations and strong ensemble programs.
- Support is higher among administrators, higher ed faculty, and in small schools—groups that value flexibility and modernization.
- Non-white respondents and city-based educators are more open to change, often citing inclusivity and access.
- Very few responses addressed the potential to remove barriers and increase access to music licenses for musicians who do not come from band, orchestra, or choir backgrounds.

Key themes identified in the survey responses are:

Benefits	Concerns
Flexibility for small districts	Administrative Misuse/Reassignment
Modernizing and diversifying music education	Loss of specialization leading to lowering teacher quality
Easier hiring	Teacher Preparation Program Burden
Cross-training value	

Major Themes in Opposition/Concerns - Music

1. Administrative Misuse/Reassignment

Respondents fear that administrators will use a general music license to:

- Force teachers to teach outside their specialty (e.g. choir teachers assigned to band, and vice versa)
- Consolidate positions to save money (one teacher for both band and choir)
- Move teachers around regardless of their expertise or preferences
- Some shared that this already happens with current licenses

2. Loss of Specialization Leading to Lower Teacher Quality

Respondents worry teachers will have less specialized training which will lead to lower teacher quality and programs in K-12 schools. Concerns include:

- Worried about undertrained teachers in specialized areas, and that programs in band, choir, and orchestra could deteriorate with less specialized instruction (56.3% of K-12 teacher responses specifically mention band, choir, or orchestra.)
- Belief that quality programs require specialized expertise and students will receive lower quality instruction.

- Fear of "jack of all trades, master of none" (6 responses use this exact phrase)
- Vocal and instrumental pedagogy are fundamentally different. Deep expertise takes years to develop. These are fundamentally different skill sets that can't be adequately covered in a single 4-year degree program.

3. Teacher Preparation Program Burden

Multiple concerns about college preparation:

- Music education degrees already require a heavy course load (often taking 5 years instead of 4)
- Adding recording arts, music production, and broader competencies would require either watering down existing content or extending programs further
- This increases cost and may deter people from entering the profession

Sample responses - Music

"By lumping everything into one license, you are now going to have some teachers who haven't taught, say choir, in 20 years suddenly moved to choir to fill a vacancy in the district. They would not be as effective and successful as they could be and end up playing catchup for the first few years. Same could be said of a music teacher being moved to elementary when they have been teaching high school for 10 years."

Licensed K-12 Music Teacher, Suburban

"If there were a major change in accredited programs in what is taught and how it is taught for music majors, then I think this could be feasible. I chose to complete my dual degree in 9 semesters, although I had the opportunity to complete it in 8 semesters. This was specific to me though. I came into school with quite a few credits from PSEO, and I CRAMMED my schedule with methods courses in order to get things done."

Licensed K-12 Music Teacher, Suburban

"Smaller schools that have trouble finding applicants will have more flexibility with who they hire."

Licensed K-12 Music Teacher, Town

"There may be concerns about hiring teachers without the necessary skills (ie a choral person to teach band) however, these are challenges many rural districts currently face with teachers shortages and hiring OFP's."

School Building Administrator, Suburban

Major Themes in Support/Benefits - Music

1. Flexibility for Small Districts

Some see benefit in helping small and/or rural schools with staffing challenges.

2. Modernizing and Diversifying Music Education

Recognition that music production, recording arts, and popular music are important and currently underrepresented.

3. Easier Hiring

Districts would have a broader pool of qualified candidates.

4. Cross-Training Value

Some teachers appreciate learning about both vocal and instrumental areas for better collaboration and understanding.

Sample responses - Music

“More collaboration opportunities at the collegiate level for students learning together and professors teaching classes together. A better understanding of how skills and techniques can be applied in multiple areas of music.”

Higher Education Faculty or Staff, City

“This gives schools more flexibility in hiring and staffing music programs. The new production element of the license allows for more innovative programming and to align courses with student interests.”

(School Building Administrator, Rural)

“Opens up opportunities for students to enter the field of music who are not interested in teaching either band or choir. Gives public school students more options to be engaged in musical topics.”

(Licensed K-12 Music Educators, Suburban)

“Opens perspectives to more career opportunities than teaching or performing; Is more inclusive of cultures & communities; demonstrates ability to develop program expansion with current trends, technology, and information access.”

(Licensed K-12 Music Teacher, Suburban)

Theme Notably Absent

One of the driving concerns of the steering committee was removing barriers to becoming a music teacher for musicians outside of the band, choir, and orchestra traditions. This theme of removing barriers for new teachers entering the field only minimally surfaced in the survey responses.

Dance & Theater

Recommendation: Retain the PK-12 Dance & Theater license alongside the PK-12 Dance license and PK-12 Theater license

Summary of Support/Opposition

- 23 total responses
- Yes: 17 (74%)
- Unsure: 3
- No: 3

Respondent roles

- 10 Licensed K-12 Dance, Theater, or Dance and Theater Teachers
- 3 Higher Education Faculty or Staff
- 4 District or School Building Administrators
- 4 Other licensed educators or professionals
- 2 teaching or working artists

Themes

Respondents' pros and cons were generally aligned with those of the steering committee. The two dominant themes brought up by respondents were flexibility and accessibility for hiring, staffing, and offerings, balanced by concerns regarding lack of depth of learning and teacher training program quality when dance and theater are combined in one license.

Sample Quotes

"Though I understand the weight of making a decision to remove something in education that may be hard to reinstate in the future, the Dance/Theater combo license is undesirable at best. In 2006 when I was looking for a pathway to dance licensure, I only found institutions that offered dance/theater and I am a dancer. The dance/theater requirements for this license at 2 places I looked were 18 credits in the content area, 15 of them theater and 3 of them dance. I don't see how this could ever balance and genuinely train a teacher to be effective at both content areas. Though the license is nice in name, it does not seem realistic to find a candidate who can teach both with the depth of knowledge one would need. Therefore, we are licensing teachers who will not be effective in one of the areas. The candidate will either be heavy in dance and light in theater or vice versa and this is not serving the profession with fidelity."

Licensed K-12 Dance Teacher, Suburban

"I think it's positive if there are more teachers qualified and able to teach both. It would allow for teachers to maintain employment in one school, and develop stronger connections to their students, staff and community. Schools having one arts teacher be closer to full-time with more classes will lead to better engagement in the arts overall as well. Students with an interest in musical theater may thrive with a teacher who can teach both but might not even choose to engage in a program that has only one or the other as a singular focus. The flexibility for the teacher with this dual license to meet the needs of

the students in the programs they teach in and to have more security of employment, is worth keeping it.”

Teaching Artist (dance/Theater), City

Request

We are seeking PELSB Board approval at the November or December 2025 PELSB board meeting to move forward with Steering Committee Recommendations:

- Create a PK-12 Media Arts License with some overlapping standards among other arts areas
- 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 with specialization embedded in the standards
- Retain the PK-12 Dance & Theater license alongside the PK-12 Dance license and PK-12 Theater license

If the board does not support either the music or media arts recommendation, we propose one of the two following paths forward and request that the board select one and provide direction to Perpich and MDE:

1. We reconvene the steering committee to bring forward an alternative recommendation.
We would request the board provide rationale for not supporting the recommendation and any other input that would be useful for the steering committee to consider.
2. The Board selects one of the alternate options below from those that the steering committee discussed. Please note that these options bring cons that the steering committee recommendations do not have.

Alternate Options

Options are listed in the order of priority. Note that each option carries additional pros and cons as indicated in the supplementary document (not to be confused with the initial steering committee’s pros and cons).

Media arts

1. Embed media arts standards in visual arts, creating a PK-12 Visual & Media Arts license.
2. Create a Media Arts endorsement accessible to all arts area licenses.

Music

1. K-12 General Music License + 2 endorsements (Choir and Band/Orchestra) (Option 6)
Create a K-12 General Music license with music production, technology, popular music, recording arts integrated. Move band/orchestra and choir to endorsements.

2. Change through standards revision (Option 2)

Add music production, recording arts, and popular music standards into the existing two-license structure

Dance/theater

If the board does not support the dance/theater recommendation, we propose the board approve the other option the committee considered: discontinue the PK-12 Dance & Theater combined license, and offer the PK-12 Dance license and the PK-12 Theater license.

Next Steps in Process

Clear direction from the PELSB board is critical for us to move on to the next steps in this process. Once the PELSB Board has approved and/or determined how to address each of the recommendations, Perpich and MDE will assemble writing workgroups for each arts license. Those workgroups will review and revise standards for all continuing arts licenses and create standards for any new license.

Media Arts Alternatives to Pros and Cons

Summary Review of Pros and Cons from Steering Committee deliberations

Steering Committee Recommendation:

Create a PK-12 Media Arts License with some overlapping standards among other arts areas

Pros	Cons
Addresses an issue of licensure that came into play by default when Media Arts was added as an arts area with academic standards 20 years ago. Creates a clear and distinct license rather than relying on course by course determination of who may teach what.	Makes it more difficult for districts to offer Media Arts since it would require an appropriately licensed teacher.
Media Arts is identified as a distinct arts area in Minnesota, and this recommendation honors it as equally deserving of being taught by well-trained teachers.	Media Arts is less commonly offered than Visual Arts and Music, so teacher candidates may experience difficulty in finding full-time employment.
The interdisciplinary aspects of Media Arts are still honored by the recommendation to develop some overlapping standards, as relevant, among the other arts areas.	Institutions may be less likely to offer Media Arts licensure programs.
Creates a pathway for media artists to become Media Arts teachers without having to primarily train in a different arts area to gain access to teaching.	Will require developing a process to ensure current teachers are not excluded from teaching content they have already been teaching.
Media Arts is already being offered in many schools across the state and is the 3rd most prevalent arts area, so despite being a new license, employment opportunities would not be starting from zero.	
This recommendation would require that Media Arts teachers have training and experience in Media Arts. Currently, this is not required.	
This may help with teacher shortages as it would draw in a new pool of teacher candidates who have not had a place in K-12 education before since media artists would have to train in a different arts area instead.	

Alternative 1: Create a Media Arts endorsement accessible to all arts area licenses.

Pros	Cons
Honors the interdisciplinary nature of Media Arts.	Makes it more restrictive to offer Media Arts in schools due to additional licensure requirements.
Creates a clear set of teaching standards that ensures Media Arts teachers receive relevant training such as working with K-12 Academic Standards in Media Arts.	More time and education needed to obtain endorsement, and may be difficult to attract people to pursue this endorsement.
Clearly delineates who may teach Media Arts courses.	Media Artists would be required to first become fully trained in a different art area, making it less likely for media artists to pursue teaching.
	No clear mechanism to ensure Visual Arts teachers gain training working with the K-12 Academic Standards in Media Arts, or Media Arts teaching practices & pedagogy.

Alternative 2: Embed Media Arts standards within Visual Arts, creating a PK-12 Visual & Media Arts license.

Pros	Cons
Visual Arts is the discipline with the broadest intersection of Media Arts.	The Visual Arts license is already extremely broad and demanding leaving teachers licensed to teach arts courses they have no experience in. Adding more standards (especially studio experience) may lead to program overload.
Increases the Media Arts training that would be required for those appropriately licensed to teach Media Arts.	Media artists would be required to become fully trained as Visual Arts teachers, making it less likely for Media Artists to pursue teaching.
Increases employability and cross-training of Visual Arts teachers.	Positions Media Arts as a subsidiary of Visual Arts, ignoring the significant intersections with the other arts disciplines.
Clearly delineates who may teach Media Arts courses.	

Music License Alternatives Pros and Cons

Summary Review of Pros and Cons from Steering Committee deliberations

Steering Committee Recommendation:

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 with specialization embedded in the standards

Pros	Cons
Opens doors for musicians of a wide range of musical traditions to become K-12 Music educators.	Increasing breadth will come at the expense of depth within specialization areas. May be perceived as diminishing the quality of education.
Increases flexibility in hiring for districts and increases employability of music teachers.	Teachers will be able to be assigned outside of their specialization areas.
Increases opportunities for more modernized and diverse course offerings aligning with student interests and career pathways in music.	Teachers with legacy licenses may become less desirable due to a lack of assignment flexibility.
Streamlines licensure making pathways less complex, including for teachers from out of state who are more likely to have a K-12 music license instead of a vocal/instrumental split.	Would require significant change from teacher preparation programs.
Specialization may be maintained through embedding specialization options within the standards.	Doesn't create separate paths for those who may only want to specialize and not gain training in other musical traditions.

Alternative 1 K-12 General Music License + 2 endorsements (Choir and Band/Orchestra) (Option 6 in original Pros/Cons document)

Create a K-12 General Music license with music production, technology, popular music, recording arts integrated. Move band/orchestra and choir to endorsements.

Pros	Cons
Ensures all music teachers gain some training in more modern/contemporary musical approaches and traditions.	May require an increased level of training for those who wish to teach Band/Choir/Orchestra, leading to more time and money required for students in teacher preparation programs.
Honors the tradition of deep specialization in Band, Choir, and Orchestra, while ensuring those licensed to teach these areas receive ample training.	May exacerbate issues of teacher shortages in areas of Band/Choir/Orchestra.
Allows teacher candidates to determine their own level of generality or specialization as desired.	Wouldn't make K-12 course assignment more flexible, but would make it more rigid for Band, Choir, Orchestra
May allow teacher preparation programs to create a more realistic courseload as a baseline for K-12 General Music teachers.	K-12 Music license wouldn't be as broadly useful as the current licenses because, effectively, to teach secondary in a traditional setting (band/choir/orchestra), you would have to have one of these endorsements.
Opens doors for musicians of a wide range of musical traditions to become K-12 Music educators.	
Increases flexibility in hiring for districts and could increase employability of music teachers.	
Creates an option for those who fear reassignment outside of their specialty area as a Band Director would not be considered appropriately licensed to teach Choir.	
Increases opportunities for more modernized and diverse course offerings aligning with student interests and career pathways in music.	

Alternative 2: Change through standards revision (Option 2 in original Pros/Cons document)

Add music production, recording arts, and popular music standards into the existing two-license structure

Pros	Cons
Ensures all music teachers gain some training in more modern/contemporary musical approaches and traditions.	Does not change current structure, and this continues to position additional musical traditions and ways of making music as subordinate to the traditions of Band/Choir/Orchestra, making it unlikely that musicians from other backgrounds would pursue teaching.
Maintains the current status regarding concerns teachers have expressed about administrative reassignment outside their specialty area.	Positions areas such as modern band, recording arts, and music production as only being able to be taught by those who are predominantly trained in Band/Choir/Orchestra which could lead to inadequate training and reducing quality music offerings in these areas.
Path of least resistance - easiest for prep programs to add to; easier to adopt a course than make significant programmatic changes.	May add even more requirements to traditionally overloaded teacher preparation programs.
	Maintains current issues with teacher shortages and rigidity of licensing that can make it very difficult to maintain music programming in smaller schools and rural areas.