



October 13, 2009

Indiana Music Educators Association, the state unit of the National Association for Music Education, represents over 1200 Indiana music teachers of preschool through university students. Having read and discussed the proposed Rule Revisions for Educator Preparation and Accountability, the leadership of our organization puts forth the following document detailing our concerns with this proposal, and offering our suggestions for ways in which the licensing framework would better serve the particular needs of the P-12 Fine Arts license areas.

Content knowledge pedagogy in the arts

Methods and teaching strategies in the arts are substantively different from other academic subjects due to the performance-based nature of the disciplines, and thus methods and pedagogy classes specific to these disciplines must be an integral part of the preparation of highly qualified fine arts teachers. A large body of research exists to support the blending of pedagogy and content knowledge (see, for example, Shulman's extensive work on this subject). Curricula for the P-12 license areas must also include understanding of and materials for the multiple developmental levels that fine arts teachers must be prepared to teach. IMEA proposes that the P-12 licensing framework must be flexible enough to accommodate both the depth and the breadth of the P-12 fine arts license areas.

Authentic assessment in the fine arts

Learning in the fine arts engages the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains. Evidence of mastery of the fine arts disciplines cannot be captured in standardized written tests, but must be demonstrated through performance-based assessments. A written test cannot prove that a teacher candidate can sing on pitch, nor can "a written examination that demonstrates proficiency in pedagogy" document a candidate's ability to use conducting gestures to communicate effectively with an ensemble. Online certification and written exams may assess knowledge but not skills, and cannot make a definitive judgment about the proficiency of fine arts teachers. IMEA proposes that teacher certification in fine arts include performance-based evidence.

The role of fine arts in teaching reading

Teachers of music support the initiative to increase literacy in our P-12 students, but note that research indicates that active participation in musical performance contributes to gains in reading skills in a variety of ways, such as increased phonemic awareness, auditory processing, and working memory (see Schellenberg, 2006, for a review of research). Embedding strategies for developing reading skills in music methods classes will equip these teachers to support emerging readers more effectively than requiring traditional courses in the teaching of reading. In addition, the case can be made that students participating in the arts develop a parallel set of literacy skills as they become actively involved in deciphering and interpreting the powerful symbol systems that are unique to their discipline. IMEA proposes that instruction in teaching reading be embedded in the fine arts methods courses.

Alternative routes to licensure already in place

Some of the goals of the proposed framework, such as streamlining the alternative licensure of teachers, are already being accomplished through Rules 2002, which provides the opportunity for alternative certification through a combination of course-work and performance-based assessments. The route to alternative certification outlined in Rules 2002 bases licensure on a combination of knowledge, skills, and experience, and has produced highly qualified music teachers. Results of research regarding alternative teacher certification are mixed. However there is agreement that solid academic instruction in pedagogy, content knowledge, classroom management, and child development, combined with a period of observation and assistance in the classroom by an experienced teacher, is essential to effective alternative certification (e.g., Scribner & Akiba, 2009). IMEA supports the notion of alternative certification, but proposes that these factors be taken into account.

License renewal for fine arts teachers

In order to improve student achievement in the arts, continuing education for fine arts teachers must be specific to the disciplines they teach. Further training in their particular content area and current approaches to effective teaching in the arts will support the professional growth of these teachers and contribute to their students' increased achievement. IMEA proposes that language be added to the framework linking professional development opportunities to discipline-specific student achievement.

Encouragement to proceed thoughtfully and with caution

In light of the number of questions that remain, the lack of appropriate definition of the P-12 license, and the complexity of the proposed revisions, the timeline for approval and implementation is unrealistic. In addition, freshmen who entered in 2009 are legally entitled to graduate under the curriculum in place at the date of their matriculation. IMEA proposes that the board take the time to fully consider the long-term ramifications of this proposal and to develop a plan that reflects educational research, builds upon documented strengths of the existing educational programs, and responds to the legitimate concerns of all stakeholders.

Schellenberg, E. G. (2006). Long-term positive associations between music lessons and IQ. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 98 n2:457-468.

Scribner, J. P. and Akiba, M. (2009) Exploring the relationship between prior career experience and instructional quality among mathematics and science teachers in alternative teacher certification programs *Educational Policy*. Online: 0895904809335104 v1.

Shulman, L. S. (2004). *The wisdom of practice: Essays on teaching, learning, and learning to teach*. S. Wilson (Ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.