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ARTS EDUCATION

Return to School 2020

ABSTRACT

Considerations for providing safe and effective arts instruction for New Hampshire students during the time of the novel coronavirus.



Unprecedented and unpredictable times

Determining how to reopen schools safely during a worldwide pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus is no small challenge, laden with concern for students, teachers, school personnel and whole communities. The present threat of Covid-19 requires us to problem-solve our way through new issues and make decisions in the moment based on an ever-evolving landscape of statistical data and medical updates. The situation is fluid. We have more questions than answers. Many of us are not sure where to begin.

This document provides a starting point. The following considerations will assist school personnel in making decisions and taking action at the local school and district level. Ultimately, each community, school board, school administrator and individual teacher will be making multiple decisions along the way. These considerations should supplement local decisions as well as support any guidance from state, federal, and medical officials.

While the novel coronavirus is in the now, a present threat, its harmful intrusion into our everyday lives is temporary. We will look back at these times and be amazed at how we managed. However, let us not forego the idea that certain aspects of practice emerging now might make a positive impact on educating our youth in the future. In the spirit of continuous improvement, let us keep an open mind about best ways to deliver art education and to engage students in artistic practices so that they may discover their inner voice and express themselves as creative artists of their generation.

Organization

The organization of this document includes three broad sections:

- Section I: Major Considerations—Health and safety issues that are generalizable to in-school settings.
- Section II: All Arts Considerations—Arts Education is Essential; Social Emotional Considerations; Physical School Environment; Alternative Learning Environment
- Section III: Visual Arts Considerations—Those matters specific to the safe and effective delivery of visual arts education

Section I: Major Considerations

This section addresses concerns that apply universally to schools, students, and teachers. These are generalizable health and safety considerations identified in the [New Hampshire Grade K-12 Back-to-School Guidance](#).

- ✓ The health and safety of students, staff, administrators and teachers is the top priority relative to the physical reopening of schools (p ii).
- ✓ Accommodations are available for individuals, students and educators, who due to underlying health concerns are not able to return to in person learning (p ii).
- ✓ District leadership teams should include teachers representing varying grade levels (p 2).
- ✓ Districts should be prepared to address a wide range of mental health and social emotional wellness needs of children and staff when schools reopen (p 38).
- ✓ Staff should be educated about the symptoms of COVID-19, and should monitor students for any signs/symptoms of illness (p 6).
- ✓ Staff should be instructed on how to manage any student identified with symptoms of COVID-19 (p 6).
- ✓ Classrooms should be arranged to minimize close contact (i.e., maximize physical distance) between students (p 8).
- ✓ Students should have assigned seating in all classrooms so they are consistently sitting next to the same person. (p 8).
- ✓ Classroom activities should be conducted to minimize close contact and avoid groups whenever possible. Any small group activities should be conducted so that students are spaced at least three feet apart (p 8).
- ✓ When possible, students should not mix with other classes during art, gym, music sessions, etc. Consider having the teacher move between classrooms instead of students (p 8).
- ✓ Staff should try to maintain at least six feet of physical distancing from other staff in their work environment (p 9).

Section II: All Arts Considerations

Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theatre, Visual Arts

Arts Education Is Essential

Over fifty national education and arts organizations endorse this statement of support for arts education.

Source: [Arts Education Is Essential](#)

It is imperative that all students have access to an equitable delivery of arts education that includes dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts that supports their educational, social, and emotional well-being, taught by certified professional arts educators in partnership with community arts providers.

The healing and unifying power of the arts has been evident as the COVID-19 pandemic swept the country. We have seen and heard it play out through works of arts on sidewalks, shared musical moment from porches, in plays and dance performance and every other imaginable iteration of artmaking. As states and schools work through multiple challenges in the years ahead, arts education must remain central to a well-rounded education and fully funded to support the well-being of all students and the entire school community.

- ✓ **Sequential Arts Education Must Continue for ALL Students in ALL Instructional Models.** As defined by the New Hampshire Minimum Standards for School Approval (Chapter Ed 300, Part Ed 306), visual art and music are required learning areas for all students K-8, including a ½ graduation requirement for high school. Graduation competencies for Arts education are also required. Therefore, arts education for students must be maintained regardless of the instructional delivery models (in-person with restrictions, hybrid, or in the event health consideration require, remote). Arts educators demonstrated the ability to provide continuity of instruction during the Spring of 2020. This provides a level of confidence in the ability of New Hampshire’s arts educators to operate in any model, with the proper planning and professional development.
- ✓ **The State’s Focus on Personalized Learning and Competency-based Education Remains Constant.** New Hampshire’s Model Arts Competencies (Creating; Presenting/Performing; Responding; Connecting) can be achieved through multiple learning environments. Arts teachers should focus on age appropriate lessons and activities that support the state competencies, modifying when necessary. Modification may mean fewer learning outcomes, re-prioritizing learning outcomes, extending time to achieve outcomes, or re-focusing outcomes to reflect a greater emphasis on social emotional competencies that are provided through arts engagement over more tradition expectations such as arts production and performance.

- ✓ **Professional Development Must be Provided.** Arts teachers should be provided professional development opportunities and extended time to refine their remote learning skills and modify their lesson plans in response to their school’s need to alter or provide multiple learning environments.
- ✓ **Schools Must Prioritize the Making and Creating of the Arts Together.** While there are many aspects of arts education that have been successful in remote environments, the very critical aspects of creating and performing in dance, music, theatre or visual art **together with others** was not. As districts contemplate various models of return, when the students are in school, the emphasis should be placed on creating artistic works together and focus on those artistic elements that cannot be done remotely.

Social Emotional Considerations

Source Document: [New Hampshire Grade K-12 Back-to School Guidance](#)

- ✓ It is important that school staff become familiar with recognizing and responding to the signs of trauma and supporting the social and emotional needs of all students and staff by creating a learning environment that prioritizes their physical and psychological safety (p 18). Support for all school-based staff on trauma-responsive instruction and social-emotional learning (p 37).
- ✓ Schools will need to model a sense of calmness and self-assurance to their students as they enter the school year (p 19).
- ✓ It is recommended that the first week of school focus on stabilizing students by spending time building relationships, modeling expectations, and implementing support systems (p 19).
- ✓ Educators and staff should also be prepared to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic with students and the importance for the changes to normal/expected school operations (p 19).
- ✓ Districts should seek to develop an integrated plan for reopening that addresses the needs of students with special needs or disabilities. This plan should consider both health and safety, as well as academic considerations (p 20).

Physical School Environment

Source Document: [New Hampshire Grade K-12 Back-to School Guidance](#)

- ✓ Develop a schedule for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are frequently touched (p 10).
- ✓ All cleaning materials should be kept secure and out of reach of students (p 10).
- ✓ Disinfectants, sanitizers, and other cleaning supplies are the responsibility of the education facility to have available (p 15).

- ✓ Students and staff should wear cloth face coverings in circumstances when physical distancing cannot be maintained (see classroom seating and transportation sections for additional guidance). Ultimate determination of their use will be a local decision (p 11, 12).
- ✓ Staff and students should practice frequent hand hygiene (p 13).
- ✓ When possible, avoid the use of shared materials. If shared teaching material is necessary, then focus on hand hygiene before and after each educational session and use (frequent hand hygiene in this setting would be facilitated by having an alcohol-based hand sanitizer available for in-classroom use, which is monitored and stored safely to avoid misuse by children) (p 15).
- ✓ Minimize the potential for the spread of germs in the classroom space by temporarily removing items that are not easily cleanable and not necessary for educational purposes (p 15).
- ✓ Evaluate the ability, weather permitting, to use outside spaces as learning spaces (18).

Alternative Learning Environment

- ✓ School districts will need plans to effectively operate using an in-person, hybrid and remote instructional models, depending on the circumstances on the ground in a particular community at any given time. This planning should also consider that those circumstances are likely to be dynamic and the district may find itself throughout the year transitioning, to varying degrees, between the various models (p 22).
- ✓ Some degree of remote instruction will be required to support students and educators who, because of underlying health circumstances, will not be able to otherwise access routine in-person instruction models (p 23).
- ✓ If a school is supporting in-person instruction while simultaneously supporting remote instruction for students who are not able to access in-person instruction, district plans must ensure that educators are not performing double-duty (p 24).
- ✓ Remote instruction in the arts may require specialized software and applications. Districts should make every effort to provide arts teachers with the technology and tools they need to provide arts instruction to students in a remote learning environment.

Section III: Visual Arts Considerations

Current visual arts programs remain active, and students must have equal access to the arts

- ✓ Arts teachers must be included in short-and long-term planning as arts learning environments, materials, and materials care and storage vary considerably from that of a non-arts classroom
- ✓ With flexibility and support, education can continue with modifications based on health concerns
- ✓ Online and blended teaching models present a variety of creative, accessible and equitable opportunities in all arts subjects
- ✓ Maintaining these courses in a virtual environment will fulfill essential social / emotional needs as well as artistic, oral, and written communications skills
- ✓ While group performances and presentations may be limited, virtual classes focused on pathways or technique development should be utilized
- ✓ There exist growing numbers of virtual galleries for visual and media arts that can allow for creative solutions to presentation and sharing of artwork

Visual arts classroom set-up and management

- ✓ Consider shorter classes to accommodate more classes consisting of smaller class sizes
- ✓ Maintain proper spacing for visual arts activities. Existing rooms preferred
- ✓ Consider staggered seating to ensure safe distances
- ✓ Consider having the Visual Arts educator teach virtually to a contained classroom
- ✓ Create a traffic flow map to decrease static motion and increase ease of social distance
- ✓ Passing periods/time between classes may need to be extended to be able to sanitize high use surfaces
- ✓ When possible, have students and educators wear masks
- ✓ When possible, avoid communal supplies
- ✓ When possible, develop personal student kits of supplies and tools (scissors, glue, brush, etc.).
- ✓ When possible, purchase one-use supplies such as pre-packaged air dry clay etc.
- ✓ Consider making class-specific kits of supplies and cleaning between uses. This keeps down the number of materials in circulation and also makes cleaning the materials easier

- ✓ Ensure that no physical materials are transported back and forth between school and students' residences
- ✓ When financially and physically feasible, consider not re-collecting consumable materials
- ✓ Avoid activities where student-to-student contact is required
- ✓ Educator sanitizes and wipes down communal materials and surfaces between classes
- ✓ Consider rotation of supplies to ensure supplies are sanitized between each usage
- ✓ No rags, sponges, or reusable cleaning supplies
- ✓ Avoid having students assist with distribution and collection of materials, except to dispose of their own waste
- ✓ Consider purchasing a UV sanitizing cabinet
- ✓ Develop art supply kits (visual arts supplies, paper, colored pencils, scissors etc.) for students for home use

Visual art technology needs for remote learning

- ✓ Quality microphone/device for educator delivery of distance teaching
- ✓ Quality webcam for educator delivery of distance learning
- ✓ Document camera or similar style set-up for step-by-step directions and instructions
- ✓ Quality webcam within contained classroom so educator can plan for and utilize the space if teaching virtually
- ✓ Encourage cross-disciplinary planning between arts and subject area/classroom teachers
- ✓ Require time for distance learning -- equitable across all teachers and discipline
- ✓ Obtain permissions for presenting student audio/video work on websites

Contributors

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