



Position Statement on House Bill 1419
January 2018

While the Virginia Coalition for Fine Arts Education agrees that students should be engaged meaningfully throughout the school day and, based on research of the importance of play, we support the inclusion of “unstructured recreational time that is intended to develop teamwork, social skills, and overall physical fitness in any calculation of total instructional time or teaching hours.” We, however, oppose HB1419 and are concerned with the unintended consequences of certain aspects of this bill and the tightness and specificity of the proscribed scheduling.

Currently the school term is required to be 990 hours. (§ 22.1-98) HB1419 mandates 680 instructional hours in English, mathematics, science, and history and social science leaving only 310 hours (1.7 hours/day) for all other instruction and activities such as lunch, physical education, art, music, recess, field trips, performances, gifted support, and any programming based on specific student needs.

The loss of flexibility locally and at the school level to design special programs and instruction could result in the inability to meet the needs of specific elementary student populations.

Further, there is the potential for a negative impact on arts instruction due to scheduling concerns. Music and the arts are a critical portion of a well-rounded education for Virginia’s students and are cited specifically in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act as subjects which are necessary both for student success and as part of a well-rounded education. As such, any discussion of required minutes for other subject areas should also include the arts.

Additional information:

- Research strongly suggests that students who participate in quality fine arts programs are more engaged, attend school on a more regular basis, develop leadership capacity and, ultimately in high school, graduate at a higher rate.
- R. Benjamin Knapp Director of the Institute for Creativity, Arts, And Technology (ICAT) at Virginia Tech, maintains that, “Creativity is essential in everything we do. Cultivating creativity, on all kinds of levels, flexes our thinking, opens us up to growth, and motivates us.” Regular quality sequential art and music instruction supports that cultivation in our students.
- In addition to the inherent benefits of the skills, knowledge, and understandings gained through participation in art and music, students involved in the arts develop creative problem-solving skills, exercise perseverance and persistence, work collaboratively, and take responsibility for learning independently.

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