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Kentucky Board of Education  
Mr. David K. Karem, Chair  
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Frankfort, Ky 40601

Chairman Karem and members of the Kentucky Board of Education,

The reorganization of school assessment and accountability brought about by Senate Bill 1 (SB1) changes the landscape for arts education in Kentucky. Clearly, the bill mandates that schools will help students develop their abilities to “express their creative talents and interests in visual arts, music, dance, and dramatic arts.” The bill also identifies the arts as part of the academic core for all students. SB1 established Arts Program Reviews to “ensure school and district accountability for student achievement” in the arts. Further, SB1 directed that the new accountability system for classifying schools should include Program Review results.

SB1 immediately suspended the statewide arts and humanities test which was apportioned 5%, 6.75%, and 7% of the overall school academic index score for elementary, middle, and high schools respectively. Almost instantly, multiple incidents of reduction in arts courses and/or specialized arts instructors were noted by members of the Kentucky Music Educators Association (KMEA) and other professional arts associations. This is a reflection of how schools and districts allocate resources in areas where they are held accountable. Because the arts will not be part of the accountability model until the 2011–2012 school year, some schools have elected to eliminate entire arts programs at the expense of their students, contrary to the intent of the legislation.

Although most arts educators welcome the changes in SB1 as an opportunity to return balance to the three major components of arts education: creating, performing, and responding to the arts; there is grave concern that any reduction in the apportionment of value placed on the arts (now in terms of program review results) will result in adverse effects on arts programs across Kentucky.

The members of KMEA have been very appreciative of the highly professional and open exchange afforded arts educators by the leadership and staff of the KDE regarding all aspects of program review development and the new accountability system. The KDE has responded to our inquiries, listened to our concerns, and included experts and practitioners in the field in developing the program review. We have been welcomed at SCAAC meetings, met with Dr. Holliday, and have been assisted by staff in discerning the most appropriate way to provide input. All have listened intently with genuine concern for working together to improve arts education in Kentucky through the development of a quality program review. We still have some concerns and reservations regarding program reviews and their role in the new accountability system, and believe that an open exchange of those concerns with all stakeholders in the decision-making process is the most appropriate path to maximizing the effectiveness of the program review. Therefore, we offer the following concerns and suggestions in the most sincere spirit of support and cooperation with the KDE and KBE.

At a recent meeting of the School Curriculum Assessment and Accountability Council (SCAAC) KDE staff proposed a new assessment and accountability model in which "each grade span would receive a letter grade (A, B, C, D, or F) based on points earned." This concerns us, because the most recently publicized model of the Arts Program Review does not provide for a calculated numeric score. **In an accountability system that uses numeric values as a measure of school accountability, Arts Program Reviews must also receive a numeric value.** Further, it is important that a percentage of the school accountability score be held aside for the arts as in the previous assessment and accountability model. If these things were to happen, the program review process should provide a qualitative assessment of the arts programs that could help a school identify areas for growth and improvement, as well as a quantitative result that could be calculated into the overall school accountability score. That score could also be used to designate a letter grade for the school arts program within the new accountability system. We see it as a problem that the program review model being piloted now results in a narrative description of the program with no points generated through the process. This qualitative only model does not appear to be congruent with the new proposed accountability structure based on quantitative scores.

A number of schools participated in the program review pilots in the 2009–2010 school year. Twenty-three of those schools voluntarily participated in the program review process for the arts. Many of those arts teachers have reported back to their respective professional organizations. One recurring comment from those teachers was that determining where the quality level of their arts programs fell against the single "Fully Functioning Level" characteristics was a matter of guessing. There were no defined level descriptions to aid schools in determining their levels of implementation. It seems that some kind of "rubric" which characterized program implementation "levels" would be helpful to schools in determining where they lie on the program quality continuum—even if these rubrics were provided in supplementary materials. A rubric with clearly-established levels would also greatly enhance the *reliability* of the program review process. Those levels could be used to help establish a scoring system for the process to generate a raw score for each school and for each

of the three contents using program reviews. Generating a quantitative score with the current model does not seem plausible.

In the KDE pre-pilot model of the Program Review (2008–2009), we liked the separate rubrics describing the four levels of implementation for each descriptor (little or no implementation, limited or partial, fully functioning, and exemplary implementation). Those responsible for rating the school could choose from among them the one that best described the school under review. The 2008-2009 model used the format of the highly effective *Standards and Indicators for School Improvement (SISI)* document which is used to complete school audits and reviews. Where a school belonged on the pre-established continuum could be clearly identified, and generating a score from the chosen rubric was possible.

This SISI format model has an additional potential benefit of being able to generate comparative data. Collecting consistent data around each characteristic of a quality arts program would highlight specific areas of need and help to focus support and resources for school and program improvement. If points were assigned, they would be highly valuable in determining areas to target for professional development and resource support. This data could be useful at the school level, the district level, and the state level. Data collected from a continuum that is more clearly defined would serve to inform schools, districts, and the state as to whether specific areas of arts programs and arts programs in general improve over time.

SB1 mandates that the Kentucky Department of Education identify “model teaching sites.” It is not clear in the bill how those schools will be identified, but our observation indicates that there are exemplary arts programs in schools all across the state. Such schools with exemplary arts programs could be identified based on the program review results. It seems logical that such schools could serve as models to guide other schools in their program improvement.

The fully functioning characteristics in the current program review pilot are excellent benchmarks for a fully-functioning program. KMEA simply urges the KDE and KBE to ensure that Arts Program Reviews are implemented with the effect intended by the General Assembly in SB1, in that they ensure school and district accountability by providing a measure capable of generating consistent, comparable, and reliable results with a reasonable apportionment of accountability weight in the school accountability score. In order to achieve this mandate, the Arts Program Review instrument must have clearly-defined levels that:

- Guide a school’s assessment of its program along a quality continuum
- Provide guidance for improving programs
- Strengthen reliability in a self-assessing review
- Provide a means to generate a raw score
- Enable the collection of longitudinal and comparative data
- Provide for identifying model teaching sites as mandated by SB1

We believe that the Arts Program Review must have numeric weight in a numeric accountability system. The Arts Program Review must maintain, at minimum, a weight in the new accountability system comparable to the previous accountability index. To assign less weight would effectively reduce the effort and resource allocations that schools and districts will place on developing quality arts education experiences. All Kentucky students deserve equal opportunities to learn the concepts and skills in the arts that challenge, enlighten, engage, and develop the creative capacities they need to be competitive in a 21st Century economy.

Respectfully,

The Commission on Music Education in Kentucky (COMEK)  
*an agency of the*  
The Kentucky Music Educators Association  
KMEA President Joe Stites, WKU  
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Dr. Robyn Swanson, Professor of Music Education, Western Kentucky University

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Steven Lin, Jefferson County Schools, Choral, ret., St. Matthews United Methodist Church

Debbie Kidd Stegner, Fayette County Schools, Elementary General Music, ret; Executive  
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Joe Stites, KMEA President, Professor of Music, Western Kentucky University

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Dr. John Stroube, KMEA Executive Director

Melissa Skaggs, KMEA Associate Director

Advisory Members

Dan Imes, Principal, Wurtland Middle School

George Boulden, Professor of Music, University of Kentucky, Editor KMEA Bluegrass Music  
News Journal



# KENTUCKY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dr. Terry Holliday  
Commissioner of Education

October 1, 2010

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Joe Stites, President  
The Commission on Music Education in Kentucky  
Kentucky Music Educators Association  
Western Kentucky University  
1906 College Heights Boulevard  
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1000

Dear Mr. Stites and COMEK Members,

Senate Bill 1 (2009 Kentucky General Assembly) requires Kentucky to begin a new assessment and accountability system forward in 2011-2012. It also elevates and mandates the role of Writing, Arts and Humanities, and Practical Living/Career Studies by specifying the use of program reviews in these areas and requiring their inclusion in the new accountability system.

The proposed assessment and accountability model is a balanced approach that incorporates all aspects of school and district work and is organized around the Kentucky Board of Education's four strategic priorities: next-generation learners, next-generation professionals, next-generation support systems and next-generation schools/districts. The board will begin its discussion of the new system at its October meeting and will continue taking input on this up to its February meeting, where final approval will be voted upon.

The list below details the indicators that are under consideration for inclusion in the future accountability model around each of these strategic priorities.

Next-Generation Learners	Next-Generation Professionals	Next-Generation Support Systems	Next-Generation Schools/Districts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement (Proficiency)</li> <li>• Gap</li> <li>• Growth</li> <li>• Readiness for College/Career</li> <li>• Graduation Rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent Effective Teachers</li> <li>• Percent Effective Leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working Conditions Survey</li> <li>• Program Reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised Report Card</li> <li>• New Accountability System</li> </ul>

Mr. Stites and COMEK Members

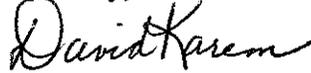
October 1, 2010

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The program review concept is an evolving and developing area that is designed to better teach and assess students within these programs. Much of the work around the four strategic priorities remains under development. As you know, the commissioner supports the KMEA position as presented in the letter you sent to the Kentucky Board of Education and the rubric for the arts program review is being revised. Concerns on all program reviews are being addressed and it is anticipated that each of the strategic priorities will have weighting for the overall grading system for schools, districts and the Kentucky Board of Education/Kentucky Department of Education's strategic plan.

Thank you for your continued interest and be assured that all aspects of Kentucky's Program of Studies are a priority in preparing students for success.

Sincerely,



David Karem, Chair  
Kentucky Board of Education

TH/KD/lj

**Statement to the Kentucky Board of Education Regarding Program Reviews  
Kentucky Board of Education Meeting  
October 6, 2010**

Commissioner Holliday, Chairman Karem, and Board of Education Members,

My name is Tanya Bromley, I'm Vice-President of the Kentucky Music Educators Association and a retired public school music educator. Mr. Karem, on behalf of our association, I wish to thank you and the board for your written response to our letter of concern regarding the structure of the arts program review and the fact that it must have a meaningful, numeric value if the new accountability system uses a *numeric* system for measuring student achievement and school accountability. In other words, ***measure what matters, and make those measures matter to the individuals who allocate opportunities and resources to Kentucky school children.***

We appreciate Dr. Holliday's support for the characteristics we believe a valid, reliable program review ***must have*** when that review is self-evaluated and is the ***sole measure*** for ascertaining student achievement and opportunities to learn in the arts. We are encouraged by your assurance that adjustments are being made to ensure the program reviews possess those characteristics.

An arts program review meeting those criteria can be a powerful tool for improving quality arts instruction in the public schools.

By law, the arts program review is not only to be evidence of a school's **support** of arts instruction, it is to be **the** documented evidence that students are achieving in the arts through engagement in standards-based arts instruction that includes on-going, **school-level**, student assessment. The old Arts and Humanities CATS test fell short of effectively measuring what we truly want students to know and be able to do in the arts, but it was effective in keeping student achievement in the arts in the same conversation with other core subjects. Our association supports the proposed balanced approach to accountability; but we would hope the KBE and KDE can find some way to clearly acknowledge the link between program reviews and student achievement so that focus is not lost on the arts as **core** subjects as defined in Senate Bill 1.

The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills has identified the **four "C"s critical to success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**: Critical thinking and problem solving, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity and innovation. The processes of creating a visual work of art, working as an ensemble to produce a musical performance, presenting a creative dance or a theatrical production are some of the most effective and meaningful experiences for building those **"C"** skills so highly

valued in the workplace. Moreover, our children simply need the artistic literacy and skills that will provide them with the tools they need for an enriched life experience.

Arts education teachers across the Commonwealth are excited about the potential of program reviews to guide the improvement of arts instruction and encourage enriched school arts experiences. We encourage the board to be vigilant in ensuring that the new accountability system clearly recognizes and supports **all** core subjects, including the visual and performing arts, as critical partners in a balanced curriculum that prepares our students for successful living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

. Once again, thank you and the leadership of the KDE for your ongoing responsiveness to our concerns and for your commitment to first class educational opportunities for the children of Kentucky.

The Kentucky Music Educators Association  
Joe Stites, President  
Dr. John Stroube, Executive Director