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October 14, 2008

Commissioner's Task Force on Assessment

Members of the Task Force,

The Kentucky Music Educators Association (KMEA) wishes to thank the Task Force for its frank and considerate deliberations concerning statewide student assessment and school accountability in the creative and performing arts.

Attached to this cover is an input and response statement based upon our review of the third and fourth meetings of the Task Force. The document was developed by our association representatives from every level (elementary, middle, high) and area (general music, instrumental, vocal), as well as a nationally-respected music assessment specialist and principals who have a background in music education. Our review committee was intentionally selected to include some of our most highly-respected public school music teachers who would provide very candid input regarding the current assessment and the range of possibilities for improvement.

Since our association is the primary music education association for the Commonwealth, and teachers in every public school district participate in our professional development and student assessment activities, we believe our input offers the best collective position of Kentucky music teachers.

We request the opportunity to briefly speak before Task Force on this very important issue.

For over fifty years, KMEA has worked in a positive, collaborative spirit with state education officials, administrators, and legislative representatives to improve the quality of music education experiences provided in the public schools. We applaud the focus that has been placed on this important issue and offer our assistance in order to ensure that all Kentucky children have the opportunity for a quality music education which fully supports creating, performing, and responding to music.

Respectfully,

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The Kentucky Music Educators Association (KMEA) is the professional voice for the 1,700 music educators in Kentucky. Our association organizes and produces world-class professional development opportunities for our members and organizes various assessment activities for our members and their students. The best known of those activities are the State Professional Development Conference and the Performance Assessment Events for Marching Bands, Solos and Ensembles, and concert Choirs, Bands, and Orchestras. KMEA has long been an advocate of authentic assessment in the arts and has collaborated with the Kentucky Department of Education in developing a listening-based assessment in music. This assessment has been favorably received by the National Technical Advisory Panel on Assessment and Accountability and is ready for implementation when funding is available.

KMEA Recommendations regarding statewide assessment in Music Core Content

The students of Kentucky deserve meaningful assessment in the arts as well as strong school accountability measures that support arts education with highly qualified staff, appropriate time for instruction, and adequate resources. In order to improve the quality of statewide assessment of music core content and ensure the development of students' abilities to perform, create, and respond to music, KMEA presents the following recommendations.

1. Music and the other creative and performing arts must remain a part of the overall accountability structure for Kentucky schools.

Student testing in the arts and an arts program evaluation tool should both be included in the overall accountability structure for Kentucky schools. Scores from both the testing and the program evaluation tool should figure into the School Accountability Index and must continue to have at least the same weight as in the current SAI: elementary—5%, middle school—6.75%, high school—7%.

2. Student learning in music can and should be assessed with the statewide assessment tests, but music test items must include music, that is, audio prompts to which the students respond.

Music content items on the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT) must be refined to include more authentic measures of students' musical concepts and the ability to respond to music. Assessments must measure students' understandings of music through listening and responding rather than by simply identifying terminology. In 2004 KMEA and the KDE partnered to develop music listening assessment batteries for all levels of instruction. This project was piloted with over 2,000 Kentucky P-12 students and consisted of music listening prompts attached to multiple-choice questions. The National

Technical Advisory Panel for Assessment and Accountability (NTAPAA) supported this approach and the pilot proved to be highly effective. This assessment has not yet been incorporated into the KCCT, but we believe that with the inclusion of music listening prompts, multiple-choice questions in music could measure Depth of Knowledge level 3 higher order thinking skills. Such music listening multiple-choice items could replace open response items in the music portion of the test and would raise the music content to a level of quality equivalent to the current test content in the visual arts.

3. Music programs can and should be evaluated through a school-level Arts Program Evaluation Instrument.

KMEA supports the implementation of accountability standards developed specifically for elementary, middle, and high school ensuring that schools fully support all aspects of the Kentucky Program of Studies. These standards should be measured by a school-level evaluation tool that provides a raw score to be calculated as part of the school's Accountability Index Score. Accountability standards should include measures of the school's commitment to provide certified music teachers, appropriate time and facilities for instruction, and adequate resources. Such accountability standards should require evidences that authentic musical experiences are provided that develop students' ability to experience music through creating and performing. The KDE Elementary Arts Accountability Model (piloted in 2007) is a good starting point.

4. Assessment and accountability instruments should align with the exploration of, grounding in, and specialization in the arts at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively.

Elementary level:

Elementary school experiences should nurture student aptitudes in the arts, provide for exploration of visual and performing arts, and develop basic skills in those art forms. Assessment of student learning in music at this level must include listening prompts. Program evaluation at this level must include opportunities for students to create and perform music.

Middle school level:

In the middle school, students study all four art forms, receive grounding in the arts, and begin to specialize in one or more art forms that meet their best avenue of artistic expression. Assessment of student learning in music at this level must include listening prompts. Program evaluation at this level must include opportunities for students to create and perform music.

High school level:

At the high school level, students have the option to specialize in at least one art form in order to develop their best avenue of artistic expression. Specialization in music is intended to allow students to work toward mastery, encourage lifetime participation in performing, creating, and responding to music; and to develop the imaginative and creative thought processes vital to the success of a vibrant culture. With this option to

specialize, relevant specialized tests must be developed and offered in music. Students who do not choose to specialize in one art form should still have the opportunity to take the History and Appreciation of the Visual and Performing Arts course and then take the corresponding test. Assessment of student learning in music at this level must include listening prompts. Program evaluation at this level must include opportunities for students to create and perform music.