

Maine's Arts Education Census: What's the State of Arts Education in Maine?

Maine's arts teachers carry out an impressive range of activities in addition to their often very full teaching schedules. According to preliminary results of Phase One of the Maine Arts Education Census, Maine's arts teachers are a valuable resource for their schools and communities, regularly teaching afterschool classes or clubs; meeting with interested students for informal work before and after school; fundraising and grantwriting to support school arts events; preparing for and hanging art shows; planning music for festivals, musicals, plays, and parades; assisting with student recording projects; serving on district-wide and state-level committees; and collaborating with classroom teachers, among other activities.

This inside view of arts education is the kind of information being gathered through the three-year Census project, now beginning its second year. The Census, one of several similar projects being conducted around the country, offers Maine arts educators the opportunity to take stock of what they have been able to achieve and what goals they want to set for themselves and their communities in the coming years. The first step in this work is a census survey to examine the extent to which students throughout the state are receiving the range and duration of arts instruction that is necessary for meeting the Learning Results and for active participation in 21st Century communities and workplaces. Pending available funding, the survey will be followed by two additional phases of work. Phase Two will involve an examination of how Maine students engage with the arts in and out of school time. Phase Three will focus on a selected set of Maine communities, examining the ways in which they support arts learning for children, youth, and families.

Approximately 23% of Maine's nearly 1200 arts education teachers completed the online Census survey in April. A list of their schools is included in this issue of *Arts Every Day*. Preliminary reports from the first year of the Census will be available on MAAE's website at www.maineartseducation.org.

This fall MAAE will take the survey on the road to gather responses from teachers whose schools are not yet represented. Regional meetings of arts teachers will be held to complete the survey as well as to discuss arts education issues and resources available to districts for strengthening their arts education programs. The online survey will also be available again on MAAE's website this fall for educators to complete.

This project was initiated by the Maine Alliance for Arts Education, in partnership with the Maine Department of Education, and with the support of the Maine Art Education Association, the Maine Music Educators Association, Dance Education in Maine Schools, and the Maine Drama Council. The first year (2007-08) was funded by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Betterment Fund. Funding for 2009-10 is provided by the Betterment Fund and the Maine Arts Commission.