

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

August 3, 2016

The Honorable John B. King, Jr.  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary King:

We respectfully request that the Department of Education (Department) revise §299.19(a)(ii) of its proposed regulation implementing consolidated state plans authorized under section 8302 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), to include “arts.”

The ESSA received significant bipartisan support, in part, because of provisions in the law that promote well-rounded educational opportunities. These provisions are a response to the last decade and a half, when the ESEA contributed to narrower curricular offerings in many schools. Prior to the ESSA, the law placed too much emphasis on students’ performance on statewide assessments. This undue focus on a single measure of academic achievement, coupled with inflexible consequences for poor performance on assessments, created an incentive to shift limited resources from a broad array of subjects and courses to fewer tested subjects.


An example of the ESSA’s focus on restoring diverse curricula is its definition of well-rounded education, which includes a non-exhaustive list of more than a dozen subjects. “Arts” are part of the statutory definition.

We are concerned that proposed §299.19 omits “arts” from its definition of well-rounded education, even though the proposed regulation includes other subjects outlined in the underlying law. This discrepancy could create confusion among states. To clarify Congress’s intention that states consider arts education as they develop their plans for using the ESEA’s Title I funds to deliver “equitable access to a well-rounded education,” we ask that you include “arts” in the Department’s final regulation.

We appreciate your commitment to advancing well-rounded educational opportunities, and we commend the action you and the Department have taken to help states understand the opportunities and resources available to them to provide a well-rounded education that includes the arts to all students.

Thank you for your attention to our request. We look forward to continuing to work with you to provide students in every community with enriching learning opportunities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Suzanne Bonamici". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Elise M. Stefanik". The signature is cursive and clearly legible.

Elise M. Stefanik  
Member of Congress