



DATE: March 29, 2021

TO: All New Jersey Arts Educators, Administrators, Principals, Superintendents, Executive County Superintendents, School Board Members, Health Officers

FROM: Robert B. Morrison, Arts Ed NJ

SUBJECT: Updated Information for Visual and Performing Arts

CC: Governor Phil Murphy, Commissioner of Health Judith M. Persichilli, Acting Commissioner of Education Angelica Allen-McMillan, New Jersey State Board of Education President Kathy Goldenberg, LEE Group, NJDOE Reopen Team.

Arts Ed NJ, New Jersey's performing arts affiliate of National Federation of State High School Association (NHFS), has been working tirelessly with local, state, and federal officials to ensure visual and performing arts programs are available to all New Jersey students.

As we prepare to bring many of our students back into our schools, their social emotional learning needs will be a central concern. This is why it is critical that our students have the opportunity to participate in those programs and activities that define who they are and bring them joy. For many students, it is the visual and performing arts.

As many of our schools begin the transition from remote to hybrid learning and from hybrid to fully in-person we want to provide clarity about the current guidance for the provision of visual and performing arts in our public schools.

**Visual and Performing Arts may occur in person, following proper mitigation strategies in all New Jersey Public schools.**

The following facts support this statement:

- 1. No "Prohibition of Activities" for Public School Visual and Performing Arts.** There has never been any prohibition of public school visual and performing arts classes and activities by the New Jersey Department of Health and the New Jersey Department of Education.
- 2. The New Jersey Department of Health cites and directly links to Arts Ed NJ's September Ready Fall 2020 Guidance for Visual and Performing Arts** in its COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools documents. This Guidance outlines the proper mitigation strategies for the provision of in-person instruction in the visual and performing arts.

**3. Learning Expectations for Visual and Performing Arts Have Not Changed.** The New Jersey Department of Education, in the report "The Road Back," explicitly states: "The New Jersey Student Learning Standards define what students need to know and be able to do and serve as the foundation of our high-quality educational system." This includes learning expectations in all content areas, including the visual and performing arts.

**4. Executive Order 230 Allows for In-School Rehearsals and Performances.** Executive Order 230 states: "Entertainment centers where performances are viewed or given, including movie theaters, performing arts centers, and other concert venues, that have opened their indoor spaces to the public must limit the number of patrons in any indoor room where a performance is viewed or given to 35 percent of the stated maximum capacity, if applicable, at one time, excluding the entertainment business's employees, but regardless of the capacity of the room, such limit shall never be larger than 150 persons." This applies to in-school performances as well. Concerts, Musicals and Plays, Dance Recitals, and Art Exhibitions - with an audience - are permissible.

Furthermore, there has been no documented spread of COVID-19 in the scholastic visual and performing arts in New Jersey or anywhere in the United States.

Over the next few months, we will be releasing additional guidance updating the International Coalition of Performing Arts Aerosol study, spring performing arts activities, Summer Guidance and a new September Ready 2021 Guidance for Visual and Performing Arts to assist you with your transition as we work to return all students to full-time in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 school year.

We recognize the tremendous efforts our school administrators, school board members, faculty and staff have exerted to provide the best possible education for our students over the past year.

We greatly appreciate and applaud you for all you have done for our students.

References:

- [COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools](#)
- [The Road Back](#)
- [Executive Order 230](#)
- [Arts Ed NJ Fall 2020 Guidance for Arts Education](#)
- [International Coalition of Performing Arts Organizations Aerosol Study results](#)