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Richard Kessler on arts education

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The State of California Considers Bill That Will Hurt K-12 Arts Education

Essentially this bill means that students who attend career and technical education high schools in the State of California do not have to have any arts instruction, at all. They still have to have all the other subjects required for graduation, but not the arts.

And the really bad news is that this bill appears to be moving full steam ahead.

I am a big supporter of CTE. In fact, I am a member of the New York City Department of Education's Chancellors Advisory Council for Career and Technical Education. And my growing knowledge of CTE makes this legislative proposal read that much more tin-eared, or shall I say tone-deaf?

There may be those who feel that students in a CTE school, ([CTE is what was once know as vocational/technical](#)) do not *need* the arts. I mean why would an automobile mechanic, graphic designer, construction worker need to have a well-rounded education that includes the arts????

Funny I should ask.

The CTE of today has embraced an education that is at its core high quality and progressive. While graduates of such programs often move directly on to a career, often in trades, rather than college, leading educators in CTE know that these students need a well-rounded education same as students in traditional, or what were once called "academic" high schools. There are many who see elements of CTE school design and structure as the missing piece in non-CTE high schools, including the internships/externships, deep connections with professionals, ongoing practical professional development, real world experience, and more.

The notion that CTE students don't need the arts is completely backwards to a 21st century career and technical education. And, it is oddly similar to the notion that students in low performing schools don't need the arts or that there isn't time. It might be interesting to take a look at how CTE school demographics compare to traditional high schools in California...

Centrally, there are two issues with this terrible piece of legislation:

1. Are the arts just for those who go on to college, a dangerous approach by any measure?
2. This change in high school graduation policy will weaken one of the few quantifiable measurements concerning the provision of arts education at the K-12 level: the high school graduation requirement.

As a small observation, I also find this change interesting, as it is quite the bucket of cold water on the notion of the creative economy. For all the talk about this economy, a big one in the State of California, how is that the very same state may wipe out arts education in CTE high schools?

[The California Alliance of the Arts has posted an item on this, including a link to send an email in protest.](#)

There are a few other policy matters I will bring to your attention in the next week or so, for in particular they illuminate some of the ways the arts and arts education field has yet to get its own act together.

Here's a clip of the section of the bill in question:

BOOKS

[Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles Over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy.](#)
by Richard Kahlenberg

[The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism.](#) by Naomi Klein

[Art as Experience.](#) by John Dewey

[Experience and Education.](#) by John Dewey

[The Mind at Work: Valuing the Intelligence of the American Worker.](#) by Mike Rose

[Troublemaker: A Personal History of School Reform since Sputnik.](#) by Checker Finn

[The Great School Wars.](#) by Diane Ravitch

[The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know.](#) by E.D Hirsch, et al.

[The Arts and The Creation of Mind.](#) by Elliott Eisner

[How Musical is Man.](#) by John Blacking

[The Singing Neanderthals: The Origins of Music, Language, Mind, and Body.](#) by Steven Mithen

[Smart Schools.](#) by David Perkins

[Creating Islands of Excellence.](#) by Carol Fineberg

[A Place Called School. 20th Anniversary Edition.](#) by John Goodlad

[Channing Schools](#)



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AB 2446, as amended, Furutani. Graduation requirements. Existing law prohibits a pupil from receiving a diploma of graduation from high school unless he or she completes specified requirements, including, but not limited to, completing one course in visual or performing arts or foreign language. This bill, *commencing with the 2011- 12 school year and until July 1, 2016*, would add completion of a course in career technical education, as defined, as an alternative to the requirement that a pupil complete a course in visual or performing arts or foreign language. Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no. State-mandated local program: no.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature hereby finds and declares the following:

(1) The foundational principle of the Education Code is that all pupils shall have access to equitable educational opportunities and resources.

(2) The future of the state is dependent upon minimizing, if not entirely alleviating, the inequities in our public schools so that all pupils will have more equitable opportunities to learn skills needed for entry into the workforce, to pursue postsecondary educational goals, and to contribute to the social cohesion of the state.

(3) Current law specifies the courses a pupil must complete to graduate from high school. However, too many pupils are dropping out of high school or graduating without the necessary foundation to succeed in the workplace or in postsecondary education.

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature that:

(1) By specifying the types of coursework that pupils must complete in order to graduate, pupils will have world class skills and the workforce of the state will be competitive in the global economy.

(2) Pupils will be prepared to meet the academic and technical skills challenges of the high school curriculum and that they will take advantage of the range of course options available to them.

(3) In order to increase the rigor of the coursework and to ensure that pupils are prepared to meet the demands of the 21st century, the courses required for high school graduation must be aligned with the standards and frameworks that are adopted by the state board.

SEC. 2. Section 51225.3 of the Education Code is amended to read: 51225.3. (a) A pupil shall complete all of the following while in grades 9 to 12, inclusive, in order to receive a diploma of graduation from high school:

(1) At least the following numbers of courses in the subjects specified, each course having a duration of one year, unless otherwise specified:

(A) Three courses in English.

(B) Two courses in mathematics.

(C) Two courses in science, including biological and physical sciences.

(D) Three courses in social studies, including United States history and geography; world history, culture, and geography; a one-semester course in American government and civics; and a one-semester course in economics.

(E) One course in visual or performing arts, foreign language, or , *commencing with the 2011-12 school year*, career technical education.

(i) For the purposes of satisfying the requirement specified in this subparagraph, a course in American Sign Language shall be deemed a course in foreign language.

(ii) For purposes of this subparagraph, "a course in career technical education" means a course in a district-operated career technical education program *that is aligned to the career technical model curriculum standards and framework adopted by the state board* .

[Through The Arts: How to Build on the Power of an Idea](#), Jane Remer

[Beyond Enrichment: Building Effective Partnerships with Schools and Their Community](#), by Jane Remer

[Only Connect: The Way to Save Our Schools](#), by Rudy Crew

[The Right to Learn: A Blueprint for Creating Schools That Work](#), by Linda Darling Hammond

[The Thinking Ear: Complete Writing on Music Education](#), by Murray Schaefer

[more books](#)

REPORTS

[Learning, Arts and the Brain--The Dana Consortium Report on Arts and Cognition](#), organized by Michael Gazzaniga, Ph.D

[Within Our Power--The Progress, Plight and Progress of Arts Education for Every Child](#), New Jersey Arts Education Census Project

[An Unfinished Canvas. Arts Education in California: Taking Stock of Policies and Practices](#), SRI International

[Instructional Time in Elementary Schools: A Closer Look at Changes for Specific Subjects](#), Center on Educational Policy

[Schools That Work](#), Center for an Urban Future

[Still at Risk: What Students Don't Know, Even Now, a Report from Common Core](#), by Frederick Hess

(iii) *This subparagraph does not require a school or school district that currently does not offer career technical education courses to start new career technical education programs for purposes of this section.*

(F) Two courses in physical education, unless the pupil has been exempted pursuant to the provisions of this code.

(2) Other coursework requirements adopted by the governing board of the school district.

(b) The governing board, with the active involvement of parents, administrators, teachers, and pupils, shall adopt alternative means for pupils to complete the prescribed course of study that may include practical demonstration of skills and competencies, supervised work experience or other outside school experience, career technical education classes offered in high schools, courses offered by regional occupational centers or programs, interdisciplinary study, independent study, and credit earned at a postsecondary institution. Requirements for graduation and specified alternative modes for completing the prescribed course of study shall be made available to pupils, parents, and the public.

(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a school district shall exempt a pupil in foster care from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the governing board of the district that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements specified in this section if the pupil, while he or she is in grade 11 or 12, transfers into the district from another school district or between high schools within the district, unless the district makes a finding that the pupil is reasonably able to complete the additional requirements in time to graduate from high school while he or she remains eligible for foster care benefits pursuant to state law. A school district shall notify a pupil in foster care who is granted an exemption pursuant to this subdivision, and, as appropriate, the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the pupil, if any of the requirements that are waived will affect the pupil's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution and shall provide information about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.

(d) *This section shall become inoperative on July 1, 2016, and, as of January 1, 2017, is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that becomes operative on or before January 1, 2017, deletes or extends the dates on which it becomes inoperative and is repealed.*

Tags: [Art Education](#), [Arts Education](#), [California Alliance for Arts Education](#), [CTE](#), [Music Education](#), [State of California](#), [Theater Education](#)

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[Out of Tune, A Survey of NYC Students' Access to Arts Education](#), New York City Public Advocate

[Annual Arts in the Schools Report](#), NYC Department of Education

[Revitalizing Arts Education Through Community-Wide Coordination](#), Rand Corporation, Susan J Bodilly, et al., Commissioned by The Wallace Foundation

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