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Perpich wins national grant to support Minnesota teacher evaluation in the arts

Perpich Center for Arts Education will lead one of only 10 state pilot initiatives of Americans for the Arts to develop effective policy work in arts education. The Americans for the Arts' new State Policy Pilot Program (SP3) will provide each state team with customized coaching and technical assistance throughout the three-year pilot via web-based tools and site visits. Each team will receive a direct grant of \$10,000 each year of the three-year pilot program.

Perpich will build its policy work around the new teacher development and evaluation requirements that have been established by the Minnesota legislature. Led by Perpich's senior director of policy, Pam Paulson, Perpich has assembled a core group to manage the state project. In addition to Paulson, the team will include:

Kathy Brynaert, Minnesota state representative (Mankato); Kris Holsen, president of Arts Educators of Minnesota; Greg Keith, director of school support, Minnesota Department of Education; Mary Schaeffle, executive director of Minnesota Music Educators; and Mary Jo Thompson, arts consultant.

The group plans to work with school districts across the state to develop policies and practices that support teacher evaluation in the arts (dance, media, music, theater and visual). "There is a need to create a process for developing valid and reliable methods of evaluation for teachers and their students' work," says Paulson. "This is a great opportunity for professional development.

"Arts teachers are fearful that in the implementation process of [teacher development and evaluation policies] they will not have the support they need. The policies and plans must be implemented with integrity if teachers are to have confidence in the process."

The new expectations will be implemented at the local level during this school year, based on a mandate that each district design a teacher development and evaluation plan. While the state has developed a model plan for districts to work from, it does not give sufficient guidance for specific subject-area teachers, including those in the arts, Paulson says.

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The Minnesota Department of Education has worked hard to develop the model plan for teacher development and evaluation, Paulson adds, and is a willing partner in the SP3 process. “The timing for this initiative is perfect for Minnesota and will help us coordinate resources in a systematic approach to assisting school districts as they address these new policies,” she says. “We also appreciate opportunities to network with other states undertaking policy work in this and other arts education issues through the SP3 program.”

Paulson believes the next 18 months will be an excellent time for teachers to examine the new national arts education standards and model cornerstone assessments because they will be useful in evaluating student work.

“Teacher evaluation and academic standards for students are related because the teacher evaluation statute requires that 35 percent of a teacher’s evaluation be based on student growth and achievement. The basis for determining that growth and achievement is the standards,” Paulson explains.

In the past decade, Perpich, the state’s agency for promoting and supporting arts education, has been active in helping to put in place state policies that require:

- K-12 academic standards in the arts
- assessment of student achievement of the standards
- teacher licensure in each arts area (except media arts)
- competencies in the arts for elementary classroom teachers
- arts credits for higher education admission

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