

**Re: Music and Arts Feedback of Latest High School Diploma Proposal
August 27, 2024**

**Indiana Department of Education
100 N Senate Ave Indianapolis, IN 46204**

Dear Members of the Indiana Department of Education,

Today's kindergartners will live to be 100 and have multiple and varied types of work and careers over the course of their lives. To slot public school students into specific career pathways at the expense of a well-rounded education would be simply irresponsible. The best defense for today's students to navigate the 7-decade work world ahead of them is to provide the tools to think, reason, and adapt — the skills developed over time through a robust liberal arts education which includes sequential, standards-based music and arts education.

A good illustration of how our current Core 40 Diploma is working well — the High School Senior who this week came by our home after marching band rehearsal to drop off an item. We discussed his long days getting up early for before school activities, attending aviation courses at Area 31, and how much he loves getting back to school in time for The Sound of Brownsburg. The fact is, he needs band. It provides the social structure and accountability which will help him be an excellent employee through the aviation industry and whatever comes his way in the future. The fact is, minus the intentionality of a fine arts requirement, he and many others would have missed the initial experience necessary to elect participation in performing arts throughout their high school careers. In other words, a key problem attempting to be solved — workforce development — will likely at best be displaced, and at worst become exacerbated, having removed the current structure, without a method to pivot back.

The proposed addition of work-based learning components in the Future Diploma, while valuable, raise concerns. Many schools, particularly in rural areas, may lack the resources to provide sufficient opportunities for all students leading to disparities in educational outcomes, with students in less resourced areas struggling to meet these new requirements. Additionally, counselors are not, nor is any student tracking mechanism, equipped to handle what is being proposed. We should expect our current educator shortage to grow by flight of the good folks who stuck with our kiddos during and through the pandemic. Disruption can be healthy, however laying this on after what everyone involved with public education has endured — which is almost everyone — is simply not a fair and reasonable expectation.

Thank you for adjustments in the current iteration and I urge you to dig deeper, seeking solutions that maintain academic rigor, preserve what is working, and ensure equitable access to a comprehensive education for all students across Indiana. Rather than specializing kids into specific business tools, we must empower them to become economic-generating Swiss army knives. To best prepare our future workforce for demands that will forever be unknown, we have a duty to teach and for students to learn creativity, reasoning, and relational skills — not to build professional artists, but professional people — through continuing to specify by design for all graduates, standards-based fine arts education.

Thank you for considering these concerns and suggestions.

Sincerely,

**Dr. Jeremy Earnhart
Parent and Student Advocate
Brownsburg, IN — Sophomore, Brownsburg HS**