

Reinstating Single Subject Teaching Credentials for Theatre and Dance

BACKGROUND: Currently, California State Standards for Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) and the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) recognize four distinct artistic disciplines as core academic subjects: Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts.¹ In California, Music and Visual Art have single subject teaching credentials, while Dance and Theatre do not. This imbalance undermines educational quality by impeding the ability to implement standards, compromising teacher preparation, and denying students the high-quality academic choices that they deserve.

HISTORY: In the 1960's, many teachers in California were certified to teach Dance and Theatre under the Fisher Act of 1961. However, since the passage of the Ryan Act of 1970, in what many consider a misinterpretation of the legislation, the State of California's Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) only offers credentials in Music and Visual Arts.² Since 1970, Dance has been subsumed under the credential in Physical Education and Theatre had been subsumed under English Language Arts, conflating and confusing subject matter content.³ Efforts have been made to change this situation.

- In the early 1990s, Senator Patrick Johnston drafted two bills, SB762 and SCR31, to establish Dance and Theatre credentials. Both were withdrawn due to lack of support.
- In the late 1990s, Assembly Member Susan Davis drafted two bills, AB1024 and AB752, to establish Dance and Theatre credentials. Both passed in the legislature, but were vetoed by Governors Wilson and Davis respectively, due to lack of support from the California Teachers Association (CTA).
- In 2013, the Teacher Advisory Panel (TAP) to the CTC included single subject credentials in Theatre and Dance in a series of recommendations on improving and updating the teacher credentialing process.⁴ CTC recognized strong support for this recommendation from various constituencies.
- In February of 2014, Assembly Member Ian Calderon introduced bill AB 2254 calling for the authorization of Theatre and Dance as single subject credentials, supported by the California Federation of Teachers (CFT), but opposed by CTA.⁵ CTA has historically opposed the implementation of credentials because of a general policy of nonproliferation. However, restoring the Dance and Theatre credential is not adding new credentials. It is reinstating updated credentials that existed before 1970.

AN EQUITABLE SOLUTION: A convergence of state and national circumstances opens a window of opportunity to reinstate single subject Dance and Theatre credentials. There is a groundswell of support growing for high quality arts education in all arts disciplines. The arts are uniquely positioned to support the eight statewide priorities in the Local Control Funding Formula and the 21st Century skills underlying the Common Core State Standards. The California Parent Teacher Association has expressed support for credentials in Theatre and Dance as well as many CalState and UC Theatre, Dance and Education Departments. To uphold the values of equity, access and opportunity for all students in all core subject areas, it is critical to establish discrete paths to credentials in Dance and Theatre. Students deserve the opportunity for a rigorous, standards-based education with qualified and trained teachers in all core subjects.

¹ California *Education Code (EC)* section 51210, sub-section (e), requires "instruction in visual and performing arts, including instruction in dance, music, theatre and visual art". *EC* section 51225.3, sub-section (E), pertains to the high school graduation requirement for Visual and Performing Arts.

² See "Restoring the Credential" <http://cdeadance.org/advocacy>

³ <http://educationcloset.com/2014/04/07/the-dance-credential-where-is-it/>

⁴ <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/TAP/tap-panel-rec.pdf> pages 10-12

⁵ <http://www.cft.org/component/content/article/62-get-involved/take-legislative-action/784-cft-sponsors-bills-and-resolutions-in-2014-session.html>

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