

Good morning and thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of uniquely qualified teachers in Maine. I am one of them. I'm Sonja Fraser and I am the Fine Art Curator and Studio Instructor at Maine Arts Academy in Augusta. In this role, I work with our student artists to help them discover their own unique style of art and guide them into becoming professional artists by taking their work out into our community. I have a Bachelor's degree in Fine Art from the University of South Florida and I have made my living as a professional artist since 1993. While teaching in Florida, I pursued my certification in the only visual art certification area "Art for grades K-12" and took the generic corresponding test (similar to the Praxis). There wasn't a question on that test that asked me anything about my knowledge as a working artist, curating art shows or teaching students how one becomes a professional artist. There were many questions about names of paintings, the painters and the year they were painted. All of which can be easily googled by anyone, these days. I don't discredit the value of the certification process but I do discredit the belief that ALL teachers should be mandated to pursue this certification process, especially teachers teaching in specialty areas, such as myself and many of my colleagues. Please consider the negative impact this will have on our teachers and most importantly, our students and I hope you will realize the loss outweighs the benefit.

Thank you for listening and for your consideration.

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