

## Be an agent of change!

You deserve access to rigorous and relevant professional development, quality art education through graduate-level academic courses, and a comprehensive master's degree program tailored specifically for practicing art teachers. Yet, art teachers in [state] are denied the opportunity to make informed choices about their education because educational administrators in [state] do not acknowledge that national accrediting bodies are held to the same standards as regional accrediting bodies.

AOEU wants to help you in your advocacy by giving you the tools you need to make sure your voice is heard. Does that seem impossible? It's not! Read Amber's story to find out how to be a successful advocate for change.

### Amber's Story

Amber Kane teaches AP Art and Art History online. At AOEU, she's the Director of K-12 Curriculum and the former Director of Compliance. This is her story:

When I taught in the public school system, I wanted to earn my degree online. I didn't have time to drive over an hour to attend the closest program. I would have been spending a lot of time on the road instead of spending that time dedicated to learning, my students, and my family. When I first submitted my paperwork to have an online degree approved, it was denied.

I didn't give up.

I scheduled a meeting with the superintendent and pleaded my case. It was approved, and I was the first teacher to be approved to earn an online degree. Now, every teacher in that district has the option to further their education online.

A movement starts with one voice, and you can be the first!



### Next Steps

We've drafted a letter explaining how [state] can be sure that the quality of an AOEU education meets the quality standards that [state] expects. Simply add a paragraph introducing yourself, add your mailing address and signature, and send it to your state and local district administrators. Share the letter with fellow art teachers in your state to add more voices to the call!

*IF YOU ARE PERMITTED, PRINT THIS ON YOUR SCHOOL LETTERHEAD AFTER YOU HAVE EDITED IT FOR YOUR SITUATION.*

*SHARE IT WITH YOUR PRINCIPAL, FELLOW ART TEACHERS, AND UNION REPRESENTATIVE TO GAIN SUPPORT.*

[Contact Person]

[Department]

[Address]

[Date]

Dear,

*WRITE A BRIEF PERSONAL INTRODUCTION. FOR EXAMPLE:*

*I am an art teacher at my school in my county. I have been teaching for my district for XX years, and I love my job. My students, art students, are some of the most talented and creative in our district. There is no greater joy in life than helping students tap into their creativity and find ways to share their inner experiences with others in a positive and productive way. I am always looking for ways to improve my practice. This is why I am writing to you today. I need your help.*

**CUT AND PASTE:**

I appreciate the hard work of the state, my district, and my administrators to make sure that I have access to valuable opportunities for professional development. As an art teacher, however, generalist professional development opportunities are often difficult to apply in the art room, no matter how well-intended they are. I know the district and state want all teachers to grow, and I believe we all need to do our parts to help make that happen.

In my search for relevant, affordable professional development, I found an accredited university that focuses specifically on teaching visual arts and caters to working K-12 art teachers. Courses at this university are 100% online and more affordable than most of the online courses I have found at regionally accredited schools.

The university is the Art of Education University. AOEU offers master's degrees in Art Education, and they also enroll students in individual courses. AOEU's class offerings include topics such as assessment in art education, managing an art room, and instructional strategies specifically for art teachers. Taking courses specifically for art teachers means I don't have to spend the time and energy trying to figure out how to adapt general principles directed at all teachers to the art room. Instead, my learning would be immediately applicable to my classroom and impactful to our students.

Additionally, AOEU offers professional development hours with certificates for brief 2-4 hours of online and on-demand learning. They even host an annual virtual conference for art teachers. I have not found any other college or university that offers such an in-depth exploration of teaching visual arts at a cost or convenience that matches AOEU.

Here is my problem. AOEU is accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC). DEAC is recognized by the [U.S. Department of Education](#) (USDOE), just like all six regional accrediting agencies, but because DEAC is not a regional accrediting agency, our state does not accept transcripts from AOEU. I believe this should change.

Many states, such as [Iowa](#), [Massachusetts](#), and [Texas](#) have updated their coursework acceptance policies in alignment with the U.S. Department of Education's guidance. I am advocating that our state moves in this direction as well.

This [open letter](#) from the U.S. Department of Education states that "distinctions between regional and national accrediting agencies are unfounded." CHEA [recognizes DEAC](#) as an institutional accrediting agency. DEAC has proven to both the U.S. Department of Education and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation that it is a quality organization and that the schools they accredit are worthy of recognition. In fact, now that each of the six regional accrediting bodies is permitted to accredit nationally, all of them, like DEAC, are national accrediting bodies. AOEU is DEAC accredited. I want to take courses from AOEU, but right now the state is blocking me from maximizing my professional development opportunities by refusing transcripts that aren't from a school that isn't regionally accredited, even if the U.S. Department of Education approves of the accrediting agency. This is counterproductive.

AOEU is not only legitimately accredited, but AOEU is a leader in higher education when it comes to art education and a leader in the K-12 art curriculum. AOEU works with over 500 school districts across the United States to provide visual arts curricula and professional development to teachers in all areas of teacher development through their FLEX and PRO subscription programs. At the higher education level, AOEU has two university partnerships with graduate-level education departments, both regionally accredited. The faculty in those education departments have vetted AOEU's courses and faculty qualifications and determined that AOEU's rigor is worthy of an institutional partnership. AOEU has proven to be a quality institution serving both the k-12 and higher education communities.

The professional learning provided at AOEU will help me open doors for my students by giving them the tools they need to not only create art but also be successful members of our community. Please facilitate the approval of AOEU transcripts and professional development hours in our state, thereby giving us the ability to meet our certification or licensure requirements with a learning experience that will contribute to achieving personal professional goals and to the ability to be the best art teacher possible.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sign

Full Name and Title

*[INCLUDE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER](#)*