National Core Arts Standards:
A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning

This narrative document outlines the grounding philosophy, primary goals, dynamic processes, structures, and outcomes that shape student learning and achievement in dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts, as articulated in the National Core Arts Standards. To view all public documents relating to the National Core Arts Standards go to http://nccas.wikispaces.com.

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FOREWORD
Understanding and Using the Core Arts Standards

The arts have always served as the distinctive vehicle for discovering who we are. Providing ways of thinking as disciplined as science or math and as disparate as philosophy or literature, the arts are used by and have shaped every culture and individual on earth. They continue to infuse our lives on nearly all levels—generating a significant part of the creative and intellectual capital that drives our economy. The arts inform our lives with meaning every time we experience the joy of a well-remembered song, experience the flash of inspiration that comes with immersing ourselves in an artist's sculpture, enjoying a sublime dance, learning from an exciting animation, or being moved by a captivating play.

The fact that the arts provide important touchstones confirms their value to the development of every human being. Nurturing our children, then, necessarily means that we must provide all of them—not just those identified as "talented"—with a well-rounded education that includes the arts. By doing so, we are fulfilling the college and career readiness needs of our students, laying the foundations for the success of our schools and, ultimately, the success of our nation.

The central purposes of education standards are to identify the learning that we want for all of our students and to drive improvement in the system that delivers that learning. Standards, therefore, should embody the key concepts, processes and traditions of study in each subject area, and articulate the aspirations of those invested in our schools—students, teachers, administrators, and the community at large. To realize that end goal, these new, voluntary National Core Arts Standards are framed by a definition of artistic literacy that includes philosophical foundations and lifelong goals, artistic processes and creative practices, anchor and performance standards that students should attain, and model cornerstone assessments by which they can be measured. The connective threads of this conceptual framework are designed to be understood by all stakeholders and, ultimately, to ensure success for both educators and students in the real world of the school.

The framework is being developed in the complex, evolving context of local, state, and national educational practice and public policy. Therefore, the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) expects that this guiding document will evolve as the standards are brought to completion. This conceptual framework is intended to serve as an entry point into the further refinement of the standards through feedback and discussion with a broad range of stakeholders.

In addition, while extensive research has been done in support of the standards revision (ranging from international standards and to alignment to the Common Core Standards in Mathematics and English Language Arts), the research phase of the work is far from complete. To further refine and develop this new generation of arts standards, NCCAS is committed to seeking out and gathering input from a broad range of stakeholders with an interest in arts education. Teachers, students, parents, and decision makers all have a stake in the work of creating coherent standards that will shape policy and classroom practice, helping arts education to solidify its contributions to the students of America.

The Context for Arts Education

Arts education has had a formal place in American schools at least since the early1800s. The unique and essential contributions of the arts to every child's growth and development were as clear to Americans then as they are to us today.

Unfortunately, children's access to arts education as part of their core education continues to be uneven across our nation's nearly fourteen thousand school districts. Some local education agencies currently offer a full, balanced education that includes rich and varied arts opportunities for their students. However, too many schools have succumbed to funding challenges or embraced a narrow focus on tested subjects, resulting in minimal, if any, arts experiences for the children they serve.

Narrow curricula and wide variances in the breadth of subject areas offered are incompatible with the ideal of a comprehensive public education. The underlying challenge seems to be how we can organize concepts, manage systems, and leverage resources to provide a better education for every child. The original 1964 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was designed to address problems of educational equity, particularly for high-poverty students. Through its most recent revision, the 2001 act known as *No Child Left Behind*, ESEA continues to be a driving force in education at the federal and subsequently at the state and local levels.

The status of arts education in federal law (and, more importantly, in American schools) has also evolved over time. While arts education has been subject to less data-gathering than subjects such as mathematics and English language arts, we do know enough to present a relatively accurate picture of the status of arts education in today's schools. The Department of Education's Fast Response Survey System (FRSS) report, *Arts Education In Public Elementary and Secondary Schools 1999-2000 and 2009-10*, affirmed that there is a real and robust infrastructure of arts education in American schools. However, it also revealed extreme inequities in students' access to arts education, indicating that arts education is not universally available, is too often limited to music and art, and is inconsistent across grade levels. [1]

These inequities in learning opportunity have, not surprisingly, resulted in lackluster achievement, as evidenced in student scores on the 2008 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) in music and visual arts. (NAEP did not test theatre and dance students, nor were media arts a part of the study.)

- [1] At the elementary level, 94% of our schools offer music, 83% offer visual arts. Fewer schools at this level offer dance or theatre: 3% included dance and 4% offered theatre.
- At the elementary level (at least three times per week) is offered in the following percentages of schools: 15% for music, 8 percent for visual arts. The percentages for dance and theatre were not measured.
- At the elementary level, 88% of classroom teachers include arts as part of their ongoing instruction
- At the eighth grade level, 57% of eighth graders attend schools offering a credible level of instruction in music; the figure for visual arts is 47%, while data for dance and theatre were not collected.
- At the eighth grade level, there are differences (many of which are statistically significant) in achievement levels between some of the diverse ethnic, economic and geographic groups served by American schools. That is, minorities, poorer children, and urban schools seem to achieve less in the arts.
- Some arts programs are provided on a co-curricular (having an academic and extra-curricular component) or extra-curricular basis. At the middle and secondary levels, for example, 82% of queried theatre educators classified their programs as co-curricular, and 13% said that their programs were strictly extra-curricular.
- At the secondary level, 91% of our schools offer music, 89% offer visual arts, 12% offer dance, and 45% offer theatre.
- Americans' reports of lifetime learning in the arts (as children or as adults) show that about one-third of our citizens have taken lessons or classes in music; about 17% have done so in visual arts, about 12 percent in dance, and about six percent in theatre. These percentages have been declining at least for the past three decades.

Education in the United States

Education in the United States is primarily provided by the public sector, with control and funding coming from state, local, and federal agencies. Public education is universally available, but policies regarding school curricula, funding, teaching, and employment are established by locally elected policy-makers having jurisdiction over school districts, who must also comply with numerous directives from state legislatures. The quality and availability of education in dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts varies widely, particularly in locales where arts education is not compulsory. Further, the educational achievement gap in the U.S. between Black/Hispanic students and White/Asian Pacific Islander students, as well as urban/suburban schools, also applies to equity and access in arts education. Federal law does require that *all* schools that receive federal funding must provide services to meet the individual needs of students with special needs or disabilities and provide access to the general curriculum, which may include arts instruction. [2]

In most American schools today, students begin their formal education in kindergarten by age five and advance in age-based cohort groups through twelfth grade. While educational requirements vary state to state, typically, the curriculum in public elementary education is determined by individual school districts that select curriculum and classroom resources linked to a state's learning standards and benchmarks for a given grade level. Students in most high schools (grades 9-12) take a broad variety of classes without special emphasis in any particular subject, with the exception of students enrolled in Career and Technical Education programs or themed schools. Students are required to take a certain minimum number of courses in mandatory subjects for high school graduation, and may elect additional courses to round out their requirements toward graduation. States set graduation requirements for students and individual schools must provide the opportunity for students to meet or exceed the minimum. High school students receive credits for courses as determined by local policies. The National Core Arts Standards are designed to encourage excellence within this educational structure. The arts standards also acknowledge the value of assessment to evaluate curriculum, instruction, student achievement, and teacher effectiveness—more often (and uniquely) through performance or portfolio assessments.

The new voluntary arts standards are designed to guide the delivery of arts education in the classroom with new ways of thinking, learning, and creating. The standards also inform policy-makers about implementation of arts programs for the traditional and emerging models and structures of education. As with other subject areas, a commitment to quality education, equitable opportunities, and comprehensive expectations is embedded within the new arts standards.

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[2] The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. Infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth-2) and their families receive early intervention services under IDEA Part C. Children and youth (ages 3-21) receive special education and related services under IDEA Part B.

Arts standards in America

The standards movement emerged with the 1994 passage of the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*. Title II of that act established a National Education Standards and Improvement Council, which was charged with finding appropriate organizations to write standards. There were three goals for the standards development process: (1) to ensure that the standards reflect the best ideas in education, both in the United States and internationally; (2) to ensure that they reflected the best knowledge about teaching and learning, and (3) to ensure that they had been developed through a broad-based, open adoption process. The standards themselves were to define what students should "know and be able to do" to the end that "all students learn to use their minds well, so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our nation's modern economy."

While the arts were not initially included as a core content area in *Goals 2000,* they did eventually become part of the act and was the first academic subject to successfully write standards under that law (though they were preceded by and profited from the previous development of standards by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics). Following the general idea of developing "voluntary" standards for "what students should know and be able to do," and in anticipation of the passage of the act, a consortium of organizations representing teachers of dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts approached the U.S. Department of Education, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1992 for a grant to move forward in this area.

The group completed its work and released the *National Standards for Arts Education* in 1994, the same year the Goals 2000 Act was enacted. The 1994 standards established achievement expectations for students at the 4th, 8th, and 12th grade. The introduction to the standards set out the following purposes for that document:

> Standards for arts education are important for two fundamental reasons. First, they help define what a good education in the arts should provide: a thorough grounding in a basic body of knowledge and the skills required both to make sense and to make use of each of the arts discipline—including the intellectual tools to make qualitative judgments about artistic products and expression. Second, when states and school districts adopt the standards, they are taking a stand for rigor, informed by a clear intent. A set of standards for arts education says, in effect, "An education in the arts means that students should know what is spelled out here, reach specified levels of attainment, and do both at defined points in their education."

Those standards, accepted by then-Secretary of Education Richard Riley, were highly influential. It is fair to say that they have helped shape curricula across the United States, through adoption of state standards, in the development of scope-and-sequence documents at the local education agency level, and by challenging individual arts educators to reflect on their practices.

International arts standards

As a part of the effort to improve American standards for arts education, NCCAS studied the standards that have been established in other nations. A 2011 study by the College

Board, an NCCAS leadership team member, found that arts standards exist in nations throughout the world. International arts standards seem to share certain universal assumptions about the primary educational goals to be attained. While the language used in different nations may vary, most standards for arts education seem to be grouped in three broad areas:

- Generating/Problem solving; this corresponds to the American formulation of "Creating."
- Expressing/Realizing; this corresponds to the American usage of "Performing."
- Responding/Appreciating; this corresponds to the American "Responding."

Further, both the history of standards in the United States and comparisons with our international colleagues confirm that a complete education system must include significant and well-designed programs in the arts and that well-designed standards play an essential role in delivering quality curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Standards in the United States have never been a monolithic and prescriptive set of governing rules for curriculum or teaching methods. Rather, the nation's current standards for arts education have served as an important guide to the development of curricula in all fifty states and in the District of Columbia. It is also important to point out that standards are "living" documents, a vision that was articulated in the introduction to the 1994 standards document:

> As we look ahead, it is important to keep two things in mind: To the degree that students are successful in achieving them, the standards will have to be raised to encourage higher expectations. At the same time, even though the substance of each of the arts discipline will remain basically constant, the changes created by technology, new cultural trends, and educational advances will necessitate changes in the standards as well.

Indeed, many states have gone through one or more revisions of their own standards in the years since the appearance of the first edition of the national standards. Clearly, standards in the arts have played and continue to play an important role in improving and supporting education for America's students. But the standards must be kept fresh if they are to remain relevant and influential.

The standards process today

The voluntary National Core Arts Standards being developed with this framework are a re-imagining of the 1994 *National Standards for Arts Education*, and more recently, the *2005 Standards for Learning and Teaching Dance in the Arts*. These standards are being crafted to guide arts curriculum, instruction, and assessment in America's schools. Toward that end, they emphasize the process-oriented nature of the arts and arts learning that guide the continuous and systematic operations of instructional improvement by:

- Defining artistic literacy through a set of overarching Philosophical Foundations and Lifelong Goals that clarify long-term expectations for arts learning.
- Placing Artistic Processes and Anchor Standards at the forefront of the work.
- Identifying Creative Practices as the bridge for the application of the Artistic Processes across all learning.
- Specifying Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions that provide conceptual throughlines and articulate value and meaning within and across the arts discipline.

- Providing Model Cornerstone Assessments of student learning aligned to the Artistic Processes.

The National Core Arts Standards will be delivered to the field through a web-based platform, designed to allow flexible sorting and organizing to meet individual teacher and local district needs. The web-based platform will allow for examples of student work to be linked directly to each of the standards. Over time, as teachers implement the standards and capture student work based on the model cornerstone assessments, this repository of representative student work near standard, at standard, and above standard will grow.

The format and design of this new set of standards will reposition the way in which the field interacts with standards and assessments. No longer will we talk about standards as lists of what students should know and be able to do. Rather, we will talk about standards as measurable and attainable learning events based on artistic goals.

A backwards design approach was selected as a clear and cogent model for building standards. The Understanding by Design (UbD) Framework®, co-created by Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins, assists educators in first identifying important outcomes of learning, then determining acceptable evidence of attainment, and finally designing the best path for achieving those desired results. These standards have been developed using the UbD framework as the major design driver. Jay McTighe, along with visual arts educator Daisy McTighe, provided early guidance as well as additional assistance on model cornerstone assessments.

These standards are also developed with the full knowledge of current trends in the field of public education, including— notably—the Common Core State Standards. Educators familiar with the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, in particular, will find similarities in structure that will aid in the smooth implementation of the National Core Arts Standards. Simultaneously, those same educators will find differences in content and presentation that stem from the unique nature and traditions of each art form. (Beyond examining the Common Core State Standards for concepts and design, the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards is not associated with the CCSS project.)

The National Core Arts Standards are built around evidence—not just evidence of student learning, but also research-based discoveries that helped guide writers and reviewers in determining best practice methods for the presentation of the standards as well as the content. In addition to research compiled by the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) member organizations, the standards writers have benefited from research efforts of the College Board.[3] (The College Board's research on behalf of NCCAS is detailed in the Research-based Discoveries section of this document.) Additional valuable research on arts education may be found in sources including ArtsEdSearch.

The strategies by which the new arts standards are being constructed suggest that they are learning events, progressing across grades and levels to create a sequential, standards-based approach to arts education. However, they also assume that learning does not

[3] Under the leadership of Nancy Rubino, Senior Director, Office of Academic Initiatives, AP and College Readiness, the College Board, and her team of researchers, led by Amy Charleroy.

happen in isolation. The conditions that create a rigorous learning environment and the value-added characteristics that emerge from quality arts education are described in this narrative overview of arts learning.

SECTION I: The National Core Arts Standards

This section communicates the purpose and relationship of the major elements of the new arts standards: Philosophical Foundations/Lifelong Goals, Artistic Processes, Anchor Standards, and Performance Standards. Additionally, NCCAS-developed instructional support resources which are available on the website are explained. These include: Enduring Understandings, Essential Questions, Process Components, and Model Cornerstone Assessments with Key Traits. All of these elements are displayed visually in the Standards Matrix to illustrate their role in the development of knowledge and skills for the discipline studied, as well as their overarching function of nurturing the ultimate goal of artistic literacy.

The National Core Arts Standards Matrix

The Standards Matrix provides a unified view of the Standards for the five arts disciplines. Helping educators throughout the nation work toward common "ends in mind" by identifying a worthy goals for students as they move from grade to grade—instructor to instructor, school to school, or community to community is one of the key reasons for providing arts standards. Rather than offering simply a compilation of individual skills and knowledge, the National Core Arts Standards integrate the processes, skills and knowledge, sample assessments, and criteria for successful learning into a single organized system that spans PreK-12 and is aligned to the philosophical foundations and lifelong goals. Rooted in backward design, this outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning in the arts emanates from four artistic processes, eleven anchor standards, and PK-12 performance standards articulated by each of the five arts discipline.

Instructional support resources provide greater insight into the meaning of the standards; provide instructional guidance; and show how student learning can be measured through rich performance tasks. The instructional support resources include enduring understandings, essential questions, process components, glossaries, and model cornerstone assessments with key traits. Some of these support resources are emphasized differently among the arts disciplines. To accommodate these nuances, the web-based options will vary slightly across arts disciplines at this level.

There are numerous advantages of a web-based presentation of standards, including adding to and enhancing the site over time and linking to NCCAS organizational member sites for additional resources and professional development opportunities. The site will also allow users to identify 21st Century skills alignment to the new standards.

While the standards are rooted in an outcomes-based approach, they are also built on a balance between the existing structure of American schools and a reasonable aspiration to what that structure could and should be. Thus, performance standards for students up to grade 8 are listed grade-by-grade, in the full knowledge that some schools do not provide instruction in some art forms in certain grades within that span. Notwithstanding this fact, performance standards appear at grade level because that is the typical working structure of our nation's PK-8 schools, and the standards are meant as a guide to articulating the place of the arts in those schools. Individual districts will have to work

through implementation of these standards within current allocations of time and resources even as they work toward the full availability of the arts for all students.

Because the typical high school model is based on course selection instead of grade-level demarcation, these standards are divided into three levels of proficiency rather than by grade. The three levels—Proficient, Accomplished, and Advanced—are flexible enough to accommodate varying degrees of achievement by students during high school, including those who build on their PreK-8 foundation by pursuing deeper engagement in one arts discipline, as well as those who explore a wide range of artistic pursuits and experiences.

The standards matrix is a visual aid that shows the arrangement of and relationship among the elements of the National Core Arts Standards. Altogether, these elements will assist local education agencies in writing curriculum. The elements include sample cornerstone assessments, supplied for grades 2, 5, and 8, and for each high school proficiency level, that illustrate how student learning can be assessed through rich performance tasks with clearly identified criteria. These tasks are intended to serve as models to guide the development of local assessments and as such, will eventually be benchmarked with student work and available on the NCCAS website.

ARTISTIC LITERACY Philosophical Foundation ⟷ Lifelong Goals					
Artistic Processes	Anchor Standards	Pre K—grade 8 Discipline-specific Performance Standards (grade by grade)	HS Performance Standards		
			Proficient	Accomplished	Advanced
Creating	3 Common Anchor Standards				
Performing (Dance, Music, Theatre) Presenting (Visual Arts) Producing (Media Arts)	3 Common Anchor Standards				
Responding	3 Common Anchor Standards				
Connecting	2 Common Anchor Standards				

The above chart is a representational graphic only. Go to the Standards Matrix to see the full grid. Instructional resources and their relationship to the standards are shown in the full matrix layout.

Philosophical foundations and lifelong goals

The philosophical foundations and lifelong goals establish the basis for the new standards and illuminate artistic literacy by expressing the overarching common values and expectations for learning in arts education across the five arts disciplines (see page 16 for an in-depth explanation of artistic literacy).

Philosophical Foundation	Lifelong Goals
The Arts as Communication	
In today's multimedia society, the arts are the media, and therefore provide powerful and essential means of communication. The arts provide unique symbol systems and metaphors that convey and inform life experience (i.e., the arts are ways of knowing).	Artistically literate citizens use a variety of artistic media, symbols and metaphors to independently create and perform work that expresses and communicates their own ideas, and are able to respond by analyzing and interpreting the artistic communications of others.
The Arts as Creative Personal Realization	
Participation in each of the arts as creators, performers, and audience members enables individuals to discover and develop their own creative capacity, thereby providing a source of lifelong satisfaction.	Artistically literate citizens find at least one arts discipline in which they develop sufficient competence to continue active involvement in creating, performing, and responding to art as an adult.
The Arts as Culture, History, and Connectors	
Throughout history the arts have provided essential means for individuals and communities to express their ideas, experiences, feelings, and deepest beliefs. Each discipline shares common goals, but approaches them through distinct media and techniques. Understanding artwork provides insights into individuals' own and others' cultures and societies, while also providing opportunities to access, express, and integrate meaning across a variety of content areas.	Artistically literate citizens know and understand artwork from varied historical periods and cultures, and actively seek and appreciate diverse forms and genres of artwork of enduring quality/significance. They also seek to understand relationships among the arts, and cultivate habits of searching for and identifying patterns, relationships between the arts and other knowledge.
Arts as Means to Wellbeing	
Participation in the arts as creators, performers, and audience members (responders) enhances mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing.	Artistically literate citizens find joy, inspiration, peace, intellectual stimulation, meaning, and other life-enhancing qualities through participation in all of the arts.
The Arts as Community Engagement	
The arts provide means for individuals to collaborate and connect with others in an enjoyable inclusive environment as they create, prepare, and share artwork that bring communities together.	Artistically literate citizens seek artistic experience and support the arts in their local, state, national, and global communities.

Artistic processes The Artistic Processes are the cognitive and physical actions by which arts learning and making are realized. Inspired by the 1997 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) Arts Education Assessment Framework, the National Core Arts Standards are based on the artistic processes of Creating; Performing/ Producing/Presenting; Responding; and Connecting. Each of the arts disciplines incorporates these processes in some manner. These processes define and organize the link between the art and the learner.

The identification of these Artistic Processes was informed by two studies conducted by the College Board: A Review of Selected State Arts Standards and International Arts Education Standards: A Survey of the Arts Education Standards and Practices of Fifteen Countries and Regions. The former reviewed a series of recently revised arts education standards from states and large districts nationwide, noting trends in the structure and organization of these standards, as well as finding commonalities among their guiding philosophies. The researchers found that the NAEP framework was a significant source of influence in the process of many recent standards revisions. The framework of creating, performing, and responding became a foundational element for the structure and content of the standards of several states: Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Washington, among others. In the other study, College Board researchers reviewed the recently created standards of 15 countries worldwide. In 14 of the studied countries, the skills of creating, performing, and responding were found to form the core of these international examples as well, though the terminology varied.

Included in the NAEP framework were definitions for creating, performing, and responding. The writing groups of the National Core Arts Standards have broadened the NAEP definitions and in some cases made them discipline-centric. Though the NCCAS definitions are shorter, the use of verbs suggests that the arts operate in an active "hands-on" and "minds-on" capacity.

CREATE **CREATING**

NAEP definition	**NCCAS definition**
Creating refers to generating original art.	Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work.

PERFORM **PERFORMING/PRODUCING PRESENTING**

NAEP definition	**NCCAS definition**
Performing/interpreting means performing an existing work, a process that calls upon the interpretive or re-creative skills of the student.	Performing (dance, music, theatre): Realizing artistic ideas and work through interpretation and presentation. Presenting (visual arts): Interpreting and sharing artistic work. Producing (media arts): Realizing and presenting artistic ideas and work.
Note: The various arts disciplines have chosen different words to represent this artistic process; however, they are clustered here as essentially parallel.	

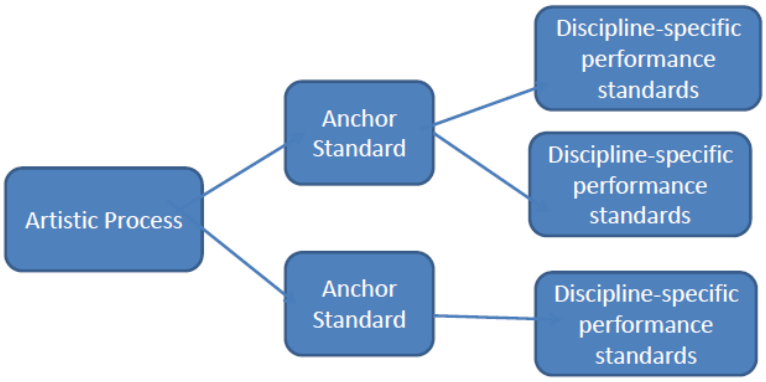
RESPOND **RESPONDING**

NAEP definition	NCCAS definition
Responding varies from that of an audience member to the interactive response between a student and a particular medium.	Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning .

N/A **CONNECTING**

NAEP definition	NCCAS definition
N/A	Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.

The current set of arts standards emerge from the Artistic Processes of Creating, Performing/Presenting/Producing, Responding, and Connecting. Each artistic process branches into two or three anchor standards. The performance standards, which describe student learning in each of the specific arts disciplines, align with anchor standards. Collectively, the design reflects a cohesive and aligned system that allows for commonality across the disciplines and specificity within each discipline, therefore establishing the appropriate level of breadth and depth required for national standards. The model below represents a portion of the full design.



Anchor standards

Anchor standards describe the general knowledge and skill that teachers expect students to demonstrate throughout their education in the arts. These anchor standards are parallel across arts disciplines and grade-levels and serve as the tangible educational expression of artistic literacy.

Performance standards

Performance standards are discipline-specific (dance, media arts, music, visual arts, theatre), grade-by-grade articulations of student achievement in the arts PK-8 and at three proficiency levels in high school (proficient, accomplished and advanced). As such, the performance standards translate the anchor standards into specific, measurable learning goals.

Instructional resources

Completing the design features of the model, instructional resources are provided as added insight for teachers as they build understanding about the new standards and consider multiple ways to implement the standards in their classrooms. The instructional resources include: enduring understandings and essential questions; process components; glossaries; and model cornerstone assessment with key traits. Instructional resources receive different emphasis based on various approaches to teaching and learning in individual disciplines. The web application of each discipline's resources reflects these differences.

Enduring understandings and essential questions

The National Core Arts Standards have been written using enduring understandings and essential questions to help both educators and students to organize the information, skills and experiences within artistic processes. Enduring understandings and essential questions focus on what are often called "big ideas." Current brain research suggests that, by organizing information (in the arts and other subjects) into a conceptual framework, greater 'transfer' is facilitated—a key aspect of planning and delivering big ideas in curricula. Further, in *How People Learn* (National Research Council, 2000), one of the key factors which distinguishes 'expert' learners from 'novices' is the ability to organize or cluster thinking around big ideas. This process allows more efficient retrieval of prior knowledge, as well as improved 'mental filing' of new information. Therefore, if we are truly interested in helping students to understand, we must be intentional in helping them to construct their own mental 'storage and retrieval' systems—which means that we, as teachers, must seek to learn about and implement meta-cognitive strategies that students can use to facilitate their meaning-making or understanding.

Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins, writing in their seminal text, *Understanding by Design* (ASCD, 2005), explain that enduring understandings refer to getting at the big ideas, or important understandings "that we want students to 'get inside of' and retain after they've forgotten many of the details. Put differently… [the big ideas and understandings] implicitly answer the question, Why is this topic worth studying?"

Enduring understandings are statements summarizing important ideas and core processes that are central to a discipline and have lasting value beyond the classroom. They synthesize what students should come to understand as a result of studying a particular content area. Moreover, they articulate what students should value about the content area over the course of their lifetimes. Enduring understandings should also enable students to make connections to other disciplines beyond the arts. A true grasp of an enduring understanding mastered through a variety of activities is demonstrated by the student's ability to explain, interpret, analyze, apply and evaluate its core elements.

In their book, Wiggins and McTighe define essential questions as "questions that are not answerable with finality in a brief sentence…." Their aim is to "stimulate thought, to provoke inquiry, and to spark more questions—including thoughtful student questions—not just pat answers…instead of thinking of content as something to be covered, consider knowledge and skill as the means of addressing questions central to understanding key issues in your subject." Essential questions also guide students as they uncover enduring understandings. Wiggins and McTighe assert that essential questions are those that encourage, hint at, even *demand* transfer beyond the particular topic in which students first encounter them, and therefore, should recur over the years to promote conceptual connections and curriculum coherence.

As the traditions and the instructional practices within the various academic disciplines exhibit some differences, the specific enduring understandings and essential questions addressed by the standards vary somewhat across the arts. For example, one enduring understanding in the visual arts standards for the artistic process of Creating is "Artists use various sources and methods to make meaningful work." This understanding is suggested, in slightly different language, within other arts disciplines as well. An enduring understanding in the music standards for the artistic process of Responding is "Individuals' interpretation of a work of art is influenced by their background, experience, and personal aesthetic." Again, this is an idea that appears, with modest variation in wording but with very similar meaning, in the other arts. An enduring understanding for theatre in the artistic process of Performing is "Artists analyze, evaluate, and refine their work over time toward an ever-rising standard of excellence." This understanding is evident in every other discipline. The same sort of fundamental ideas and core processes appear in the enduring understandings of dance, and media arts as well. For dance, in the artistic process of Connecting: "Form and content in one art form can transfer and interface with other arts." In media arts, for Producing: "The way a work is presented influences the audience's response."

Model cornerstone assessments

In education, what is chosen for assessment signals what is valued. In other words, the evidence that is collected tells students what is most important for them to learn. If it is not assessed, it will likely be regarded as unimportant. Sample model cornerstone assessments are provided within the standards to illustrate the type of evidence needed to show attainment of desired learning. This idea is key to backward design; for example, the assessments bring the standards to life by illustrating the demonstrations of desired learning and the criteria by which student performances should be judged. Standards-based curriculum and associated instruction can then be designed "backward" from key assessments that reflect the desired outcomes.

Jay McTighe (2011), describing the characteristics of cornerstone assessments, wrote "They:

- are *curriculum embedded* (as opposed to externally imposed);
- *recur over the grades*, becoming increasingly sophisticated over time;
- establish *authentic contexts* for performance;
- assess *understanding* and *transfer* via genuine performance;
- *integrate 21st century skills* (e.g., critical thinking, technology use, teamwork) with subject area content;
- evaluate performance with established *rubrics*;
- engage students in *meaningful learning* while encouraging the best teaching;

- provide content for a student's portfolio (so that they graduate with a *resume of demonstrated accomplishments* rather than simply a transcript of courses taken).

Unlike external standardized tests that "drop in" occasionally, cornerstone assessments are curriculum-embedded. Indeed, the term cornerstone is meant to suggest that just as a cornerstone anchors a building, these assessments should anchor the curriculum around the most important performances that we want students to be able to do (on their own) with acquired content knowledge and skills. They are intended to engage students in applying knowledge and skills in authentic and relevant contexts. They call for higher-order thinking (e.g., evaluation) and habits of mind (e.g., persistence) in order to achieve successful results. Their authenticity and complexity is what distinguishes them from the de-contextualized, selected-response items found on many tests.

Cornerstone tasks serve as more than just a means of gathering assessment evidence. These tasks are, by design, "worth teaching to" because they embody valuable learning goals and worthy accomplishments. Accordingly, they should be presented at the *beginning* of a course or a unit of instruction to serve as meaningful and concrete learning targets for students. Such assessment transparency is needed if standards are going to be met. Students must know the tasks to be mastered well in advance, and have continued opportunities to work toward their accomplishment.

The illustrative cornerstone assessments included in the standards reflect genuine and recurring performances that become increasingly sophisticated across the grades. Just as a keel prevents boats from aimless drift, these tasks are designed to prevent "curriculum drift" by helping educators and learners always keep the ends—lifelong goals—in mind.

For these reasons, cornerstone assessments are included in the National Core Arts Standards project. The standards are built with the expectation that schools or districts will value the understanding and transfer of knowledge and skills that will come with a standards-based curriculum in the arts and therefore, acknowledge that they are important curricular goals. Moreover, NCCAS hopes that the inclusion of cornerstone assessments in this project will focus the great majority of classroom- and district-level assessments around rich performance tasks that demand transfer**.** These assessments also provide the basis for collecting the benchmark student work that illustrates the nature and quality of student achievement envisioned in the standards. This paradigm shift in measuring student learning in the arts will offer relevant and reliable evidence of what students truly understand and know how to do, for it is only when students are able to apply their learning thoughtfully and flexibly to a new situation that true understanding of the content is demonstrated.

Integral to each model cornerstone assessment are *key traits*. Key traits describe the criteria or "look-for's" used to build evaluation tools for open-ended performance tasks. The lists of key traits included in these example performance tasks disclose for students and teachers what skills and cognitive demands are being asked for in the task.

Process components

Process components are the steps that artists carry out as they complete each artistic process. Although these steps are not uniform in either sequence or repetition, students' ability to carry out these operational verbs empowers them to carry out the process independently. The process components played a key role in generating enduring

understandings and performance standards, and serve as the action verbs that collectively build toward the artistic processes. Process components and their definitions are presented among supplemental resources. In the final presentation of standards individual arts disciplines have placed differing levels of emphasis on the process components. Music standards, in particular, place process components in a central role. Visual arts standards, on the other hand, have chosen to articulate their process components entirely within their model cornerstone assessments.

SECTION II: Establishing Principles and Informing the Work

Foundations of Artistic Literacy
Artistic literacy is the knowledge and understanding required to participate authentically in the arts. Fluency in the language(s) of the arts is the ability to create, perform/produce/present, respond, and connect through symbolic and metaphoric forms that are unique to the arts. It is embodied in specific philosophical foundations and lifelong goals that enable an artistically literate person to transfer arts knowledge, skills, and capacities to other subjects, settings, and contexts.

In developing these standards, NCCAS has provided a structure within which educators can give all children key arts experiences. Through creative practices, these experiences will help them understand what it means to be artistically literate, and how that literacy can enrich their education and lives with 21st century skills developed through the arts.

What it means to be artistically literate

While individuals can learn *about* dance, media, music, theatre, and visual arts through reading print texts, artistic *literacy* requires that they engage in artistic creation processes directly through the use of appropriate materials (such as charcoal or paint or clay, musical instruments and scores, digital and mechanical apparatuses, light boards, and the actual human body) and in appropriate spaces (concert halls, stages, dance rehearsal spaces, arts studios and computer labs). For authentic practice to occur in arts classrooms, teachers and students must participate fully and jointly in activities where they can exercise the creative practices of imagine, investigate, construct, and reflect as unique beings committed to giving meaning to their experiences. In our increasingly multi-media age, where information is communicated less through numeracy and the written word, these meta-cognitive activities are critical to student learning and achievement across the arts and other academic disciplines.

Throughout history the arts have provided essential means for individuals and communities to generate experiences, construct knowledge, and express their ideas, feelings, and beliefs. Each arts discipline shares common goals, but approaches them through distinct media, practices, and techniques. Due to the highly process-oriented and reflective nature of arts making, arts education naturally encourages creative thinking, logical reasoning, and meta-cognition. Active engagement in the artistic process allows individuals to develop and realize their creative potential(s).

In addition to creating and performing, study of one's own and others' art involves teachers and students in exploring and making sense of the broad human condition across time and cultures.

Arts literacy also fosters connections among the arts and between the arts and other disciplines, thereby providing opportunities to access, develop, express, and integrate meaning across a variety of content areas. Indeed, an arts literate individual recognizes the value of the arts as a place of free expression and the importance of observing and participating in the social, political, spiritual, financial, and aesthetic aspects of their communities (both local and global, in person and virtually) and works to introduce the arts into those settings.

Recent research on arts education as it relates to students' social, emotional, and cognitive developmental needs indicates that arts experiences are consistently found to give students tools to make sense of their world and make connections between disparate ideas, while also making connections between themselves and others. Researchers found that these social and emotional benefits of arts education exist not only for students of younger grades, but for students of all disciplines at each grade level.

An artistically literate person understands that each arts discipline employs unique sign and symbol systems to make and express meaning. For example, while a theatre artist or a dancer might primarily be concerned with the ways that dancers and actors interact with each other, spaces and materials, a musician might consider the signs that are transferred from a conductor to members of an orchestra or choir as signifiers that must be interpreted accurately in order for an ensemble to work together. Visual artists must understand the nuances of line, color, texture, and form to successfully create and communicate. Conversely media artists must understand the languages of analogue and digital media if they want to determine appropriate methods of integrating technologies for the purpose of artistic expression. Arts literacy, therefore, requires an acknowledgement that each arts discipline has a language of its own that is informed by its history and common practices and learning these languages requires in-depth immersion and training.

The arts provide means for individuals to collaborate and connect with others in an inclusive environment as they create, prepare, and share artwork that bring communities together. Additionally, an arts literate person must have the capacity to access, develop, and express or transfer arts knowledge and understandings into a variety of settings both in and outside of school. For example, within a school setting, a student might use their theatrical training in acting to create a persuasive presentation in a history, science, or math class. Conversely, a media arts student may apply his or her expertise in animation to the making of a series of public service announcements for a local cable television channel.

The Common Core Standards for English Language Arts acknowledge this connection by including numerous arts references in the text of the standards, including recommendations for students to read works of drama, analyze and interpret images and illustrations, compare the same work in different media, and complement written works with graphic and multimedia components.

The National Core Arts Standards' philosophical foundations and lifelong goals establish a definition of artistic literacy that clarifies how students can be involved in the arts beyond the high school level, and how that arts involvement contributes to college, career, and lifelong learning. To that end, the College Board researchers conducted a survey of college arts instructors and department heads to determine what students are

commonly expected to know, understand, and be able to do in the arts beyond high school. The most common responses indicated that at this level students are expected to "develop functional competence in manipulating the basic elements, principles, and vocabulary" of dance, media arts, music, theatre, and/or visual art, but further responses noted that the opportunity to refine one's work in response to feedback is significant as well. This outcome implies that arts study and therefore, artistic literacy, even among non-arts majors, is not limited to arts history and appreciation courses, but should include art-making experiences that can lead to a satisfying lifetime of active and creative practices.

Arts Success and Achievement through Creative Practices

Success and achievement in the arts demands engagement in the four fundamental creative practices of imagination, investigation, construction, and reflection in multiple contexts. These meta-cognitive activities nurture the effective work habits of curiosity, creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, communication, and collaboration, each of which transfers to the many diverse aspects of learning and life in the 21st century.

The role of creative practices

The fundamental creative practices of imagination, investigation, construction, and reflection, which are essential in the arts but equally important for science and mathematics learning, are cognitive processes by which students not only learn within an individual discipline but also transfer their knowledge, skill, and habits to other contexts and settings. Creative practices are essential for teaching and learning the arts, and are therefore included in this document to help arts teachers identify methods to implement the core arts standards.

In the context of the National Core Arts Standards, the creative practices are fundamental for the Creating process, and also contribute to other processes across all five disciplines. The arts, both in academic and professional environments, are steeped in process and involve the interplay of artistic skills, individual voice, and the unexpected. Creativity, in particular, is given greater emphasis in the arts than in other academic disciplines. Arts teaching therefore requires a learning environment in which students are encouraged to imagine, investigate, construct, and reflect.

One effective classroom approach to elicit creative process (which is common in the arts and supported by Understanding by Design) is to encourage open-ended responses by asking essential questions and providing lessons that allow for more than one solution. While providing engaging materials and access to technology can support creativity, they do not ensure that it occurs. Arts education requires students to engage in higher-order thinking skills inclusive of the creative practices. Indeed, the arts' natural fusion of logical, analytical thought and playful unexpectedness provides students with extraordinary opportunities to exercise their creativity through the artistic processes.

A student engaged in creative practices:

- *Imagines* a mental image or concept.
- *Investigates* and studies through exploration or examination.
- *Constructs* a product by combining or arranging a series of elements.
- *Reflects* and thinks deeply about his or her work.

Creative practices:

- Evoke deep, meaningful engagement in the arts.
- Can be fluid, though there is purpose and meaning to the order in which they occur.
- Vary from person to person, project to project, and moment to moment.
- Require intense cognition that can be developed through arts engagement.

Based on the cognitive rigor of the creative practices, the College Board undertook a study to research areas of alignment between these creative practices and the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and the Standards for Mathematical Practice. The findings – presented in A Review of Connections between the Common Core Standards and the National Core Arts Standards Framework – indicated that the creative practices of investigation and reflection are connected to all ten of the Anchor Standards for Reading, and all four skills—imagination, investigation, construction, and reflection—were strongly represented in the Anchor Standards for Writing. Additionally, all four creative practices were found to be aligned with each of the Standards for Mathematical Practice.

Contextual awareness

Contextual awareness in arts learning arises as an indirect but critical understanding and appreciation of art making through the creative practices. Through arts teaching, students view, make, and discuss art works, and come to realize that the arts exist not in isolation, but within the multiple dimensions of time, space, culture, and history. These intrinsic aspects of art making challenge students to achieve expressive freedom within limits and give context that informs the student's relationship with art and how such experiences can influence their daily life, including understandings of cultural literacy and appreciation of natural phenomena. Specifically, among other things, contextual awareness in the arts allows a student to:

- Absorb meaningful information through the senses.
- Develop openness in apprehension and push boundaries.
- Effectively construct artistic meaning within their cultural milieu.
- Grasp the nature and evolution of history.
- Communicate effectively within variable situations and for diverse audiences.
- Navigate the intricacies of emerging digital and global environments.

21st Century skills

The 21st Century Arts Map, published by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, begins with a key observation: "Anyone who has ever seen a student become excited, energized, and confident through artistic exploration has seen first-hand how arts education engages children and contributes to their overall development. The arts—dance music, theatre, and the visual arts, which collectively include the media arts—are recognized as "core academic subjects" in Federal law, as well as in state statutes and core educational documents. While each of the arts disciplines has its own unique set of knowledge, skills, and processes, the arts share common characteristics that make arts education powerful preparation for college, career, and a fulfilling life."

Creativity and innovation
Creativity and innovation are essential for the development of the necessary skills to flourish in the 21st century, as well as to promote essential skills for successful student and workplace achievement. The goal of fostering creativity and innovation through arts education is included in numerous initiatives inside and outside education across all subjects and disciplines. Specifically, it is described in a variety of state arts standards and frameworks across the United States and is diversely applied in classrooms across the nation as an inherent aspect of teaching and learning in the arts. Widely held definitions of these aspects include:

- Creativity is the capability or act of conceiving something original/unusual.
- Innovation is the implementation of something new.
- Invention is the creation of something that has never been made before and is recognized as the product of some unique insight.

The arts impact educational change by taking the lead in the inclusion of creative practices rooted in instruction; by recognizing creativity as a tool to learning in other content areas and for influencing many aspects of one's life; and by exploring ways to use creativity as evidence in alternative assessments that provide new ways of showing what students know and can do. As a pathway to learning in arts education, creative practices include such attributes as flexible thinking, creative problem-solving, inquisitiveness, and perseverance. Creative and innovative strategies build students ability in problem formulation, research, interpretation, communication, precision and accuracy.

Critical thinking and problem solving
Critical thinking is the essential, intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information as a guide to belief and action. It is through critical thinking and problem solving that students learn the higher-order thinking skills necessary to engage in the artistic processes and, therefore, begin to achieve artistic literacy.

Standards-based arts education dictates that teachers lead students in applying critical thinking to the artifacts and processes that students find most compelling: the art work of themselves, their peers, and the artists in the wide world they are growing to understand. Precisely because of the emotional attachment that students have for works of art, the application of critical thinking to understanding and evaluating those works leads to the development of those structures or elements of thought implicit in all reasoning: purpose, problem, or question-at-issue; assumptions; concepts; empirical grounding; reasoning leading to conclusions; implications and consequences; objections from alternative viewpoints; and frame of reference. Critical thinking also builds contextual awareness as an indirect but fundamental aspect of artistic practice and appreciation. Through viewing, making and discussing art works, students come to realize that the arts do not exist in isolation, but are always situated within multiple dimensions, including time, space, culture and history.

Regarding the process of problem-solving, students who actively study the arts necessarily engage in and develop a disciplined, step-by-step approach to problems in creating, realizing, or understanding art. The steps involved may vary from one arts discipline to another and the order of steps in the process may change according to the personal ideas of the student artist, which in turn may prompt more than one iteration of

work. But the underlying discipline is always present. In working with the arts, as with most valuable processes in our world, students invest in such things as allocating resources, monitoring progress, and evaluating the results.

Communication
Communication lies at the heart of the arts. In studying the arts, students develop a vast repertoire of skills in intrapersonal and interpersonal processing, listening, observing, speaking, questioning, analyzing, and evaluating meaning. Often, in the arts, this meaning concerns ideas that may be difficult to express outside of the medium chosen by the artist, but is always of great significance to the artist and the informed observer. Use of these processes is developmental and transfers to all areas of life: home, school, community, work, and beyond. It is through communication that collaboration and cooperation occur.

In learning to communicate through the arts in a standards-based curriculum, students learn to:

- Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts.
- Listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions.
- Use communication for a range of purposes (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate and persuade).
- Utilize multiple media and technologies, and know how to judge its effectiveness as a priority as well as assess its impact.
- Communicate effectively in diverse environments (including multi-lingual).

In order to understand the potential for connection between the arts learning and the acquisition of 21st century skills, the College Board completed an analysis comparing the 1994 *National Standards for Arts Education* to the 21st Century Art Skills Map.
The study noted areas where the goals and ideas expressed in these two documents aligned with one another. The 21st century skills mentioned above included the traits that were most frequently aligned to the 1994 standards, even though these two documents were created 16 years apart from one another. Further, they were reinforced in the standards of every arts discipline, at every grade level, as a primary component of the standards. The National Dance Education Association (NDEO) commissioned a similar study: *An Analysis of the Standards for Learning and Teaching Dance in the Arts (2005) as Compared to the 21st Century Skills Map* (Rima Faber, 2012).

Collaboration
Collaboration is the process where two or more people or groups work together to realize shared goals. Most collaboration requires leadership, although the form of leadership can be social within a decentralized and egalitarian group. Collaboration is in many ways the engine that drives our economy and our sense of shared culture. It is also an inherent part of arts instruction, whether the collaboration includes all the students in a performing cast or ensemble, or the partnership between a single artist and his or her peers and audience or in a shared visual arts project that incorporates the ideas and techniques of multiple young artists.

Further, standards-based arts instruction, by its very nature, engages students with each another, helping them:

- Develop, implement, and communicate new ideas to others effectively.
- Be open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives; incorporate group input and feedback into the work.
- Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work and understand the real world limits to adopting new ideas.
- View failure as an opportunity to learn; understand that creativity and innovation is a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes.
- Demonstrate ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams.
- Exercise flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal.
- Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work, and values the individual contributions made by each team member.

SECTION III: Research-based Discoveries

These standards have been prepared in the context of almost two decades of research on arts teaching and learning amassed since the writing of the 1994 standards. In addition to research compiled by the subject matter associations involved in NCCAS, The College Board, an NCCAS member, has conducted the following six research projects on behalf of National Core Arts Standards:

1. International Arts Education Standards: A Survey of the Arts Education Standards and Practices of Fifteen Countries and Regions outlines existing international standards and/or benchmarks for arts education in more than a dozen of the world's most educationally advanced countries. This report includes summaries of standards and practices, and includes a cross-referenced chart of common themes and ideas from Australia, Austria, Canada, China, Finland, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Scotland, Singapore, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States, and Venezuela. The arts standards of these countries were identified by NCCAS as exemplar resources for the coalition's writers and reviewers in their upcoming standards revision work.

2. Arts Education Standards and 21st Century Skills is an analysis of the relationship between the 1994 National Standards for Arts Education and the 21st Century Skills Map in the Arts, published by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. This report offers an analysis of the level of alignment between the current arts content standards and the skills, lesson examples, and outcomes included in the P21 Arts Map, across three grade bands in the disciplines of music, dance, visual art, and theatre. The arts map, created by the NCCAS professional education association members and released in 2010, identifies creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication, and nine other skills developed through arts learning. NCCAS expects alignment with 21st century skills to be a fundamental aspect of the next generation of arts standards.

3. College Learning in the Arts was conducted in two phases. Phase I is a summary and analysis of accreditation standards—specifically those standards related to course content and instruction—for schools offering two- and four-year degrees in the arts. The second portion is a review of course goals for all AP courses in the arts, including AP Studio Art, AP Art History, and AP Music Theory. Finally, a survey of college textbooks in the arts is presented, in an effort to identify which types of arts information and content are most widely available on college campuses. Most of the material that was reviewed was rather broad in its treatment of the standards, and consequently the analysis of these resources is

equally broad. In an effort to obtain more specific information about particular expectations of student arts performance at the college level, College Board researchers coordinated Phase II of this project, a national survey of professors and department heads in dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and media arts in two- and four-year colleges throughout the United States.

4. A Review of Selected State Arts Standards examines the recently revised arts education standards (in dance, music, theatre, and visual arts) of eight states and districts; reviews media arts standards in four states or districts; and analyzes possible links between the new National Arts Education Standards and the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Math. This report looks at the revised arts standards of seven states and one district in the United States: Colorado, Florida, Michigan, New Jersey, New York City (which also included the discipline area of "moving image."), North Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington. The second part of the report focuses on the relatively new arts form of media arts, offering definitions, examples of best practice, and standards structure and organization in four states/districts: Los Angeles Unified School District, Minnesota, New York City, and South Carolina.

5. Child Development and Arts Education: A review of Current Research and Best Practices is a literature review that analyzes research linking arts-based learning and human development, including physical and cognitive growth and academic skills such as long-term memory, reading, creative thinking, and writing fluency. The study also includes research on the social and emotional impact of arts participation. This report is divided into four literature reviews that address the discipline of dance, music, theatre, and visual arts. The reviews are further divided by grade band (early childhood, elementary, middle, high school, and college) each of which includes information on both general and discipline-specific developmental characteristics of students. The report also features a series of specific pedagogical practices that address social, emotional, and/or cognitive needs and abilities of students in each discipline and grade band.

6. A Review of Connections between the Common Core State Standards and the Core Arts Standards is a study of the Common Core standards as they relate to arts-based learning. This study was divided into two sections: In the first portion, researchers identified arts references already present in the Common Core State Standards. This analysis noted only the instances where the arts are explicitly mentioned—to commending that students read a play, for example, or respond to a performance—as opposed to recording standards that advocated for lines of inquiry that may or may not be met through arts-based study. The next phase of research involved identifying elements of the Common Core State Standards that reference the same broad goals, philosophies, thinking skills, and creative practices that are emphasized in the framework and planning documents for the Core Arts Standards.

SECTION IV: Concluding Thoughts: Re-imagined Core Arts Standards for America's Schools

The National Core Arts Standards are designed to serve an eminently practical purpose—to improve the teaching and learning of the arts in America's schools, and by doing so, to improve the experiences of more than fifty million students annually. To do so, they have been written with one eye on the realities faced by our nation's metropolitan, rural, suburban and independent school districts in the twenty-first century. Key among those

realities is the increased attention to accountability for instruction and the outcomes should be expected of instruction in the arts. The new arts standards will help address those issues.

The new benchmarks for arts learning articulated in these standards also focus on the more distant yet still definable goal of achieving a complete, balanced education for all our students. Using the standards as a guide, teachers, curriculum designers, and decision makers (including administrators and school board members) can help students achieve the many skills and habits of thought that equip them to obtain success in school and beyond. That is to say, the standards serve the educational contexts for student success.

Those educational contexts for success are interwoven with a clear definition of the elements of artistic literacy and how our future citizens can achieve it. The pursuit of this literacy (accompanied by defining philosophical foundations and lifelong goals) through standards-based arts education will, in turn, support the bedrock developments that lead to student achievement in school, career, and life.

With a focus on processes, enduring understandings, essential questions, and assessments, these arts standards represent a new and innovative approach to arts education that will serve students, teachers, parents, and decision-makers now and in the future.