

Fine Arts Standards Focus Group Meetings
November 15 and 16, 2010
Summary of Comments and Issues Brought Forth by Participants
from Four Arts Disciplines

1. Are the current five standards still appropriate?

- Many suggested:
 - Combining Analyzing and Responding with Valuing the Arts/Aesthetic Reflection
 - Removing Connections, Relationships, and Applications
 - Combining analyzing/responding (criticism) and Valuing/Aesthetics—some suggested these be folded in with Historical/Cultural and with Connections, application, and relationships. At the same time, several reminded us that they do the real “academic” teaching and justification of their work *with* these non-performance standards. As the other subject areas were revised, some of them tried to combine, so that will be a consideration: subsuming, combining, and refitting—perhaps in a new model.
(Some concern that we keep Historical/Social standard)
 - Using work of art/piece of music/theatre as driver; we tend to pick artworks first, then find standards with which to align.
(Some suggested keeping standards as they are, but do small add/delete to each content standard.)
 - Having more of a studio-focus with emphasis on art-making and the creative process
 - Simplifying or condense them; they are too unwieldy
 - Using skill levels vs. grade levels in high school—but were happy with most grades eight and below remaining as is. The push for change comes largely from ensemble directors who work in 9-12 groups, but also from theatre and visual art teachers who face troupes of mixed ages and grades.
 - Emphasizing performance/production (Creative Expressions) as a key standard—one called it the “shell” in which the others are contained—and seemed to wonder if that standard could rise to the fore.
(There also was mention of emphasizing perception more prominently)

- Several suggested:
 - Aligning the standards with 21st century skills: Creativity & Innovation; Communication; Problem-Solving; Collaboration; Critical Thinking; then within address history, criticism, etc.
(Some concern with the extent to which the arts will be asked to align with Common Core, as presented by Math, ELA, SS, etc.)
 - Emphasizing a more student-centered, product-centered
 - Reducing the five standards to three or four (one suggestion was Research, Creating, Responding)
 - Revising for more depth in fewer areas

- Eliminating statements that are vague, wordy, or overwhelming
- Emphasizing technology more

- Addressing environmental concerns such as arts rooms, materials, etc.

Other comments:

- Need to pay attention to revision of national arts standards
- Design education is being added to NAEA standards; should be added to ours
- Should there be a standard that talks about modern/current/living artists?
- Standards shouldn't assume the student has had a complete arts education prior to current grade
- Can we address the idea of citizenship and education and the relationship to the local environment?
- Time element is greatest concern

2. What comments do you have about the current structure including grade-level clusters of K-4, 5-8 and 9-12?

- Overwhelming consensus that grades 9-12 should be changed to address skill level, e.g., beginner, intermediate, advanced
- Participants were almost universal in desiring some sort of skill levels vs. grade levels in high school—but were happy with most grades 8 and below remaining as is.
- Follow how classes are taught and grouped.
- Several suggested adding Pre K to grade levels
- Several suggestions for regrouping K-8:
 - Change K-4 to K-5, then 6-8
 - Change to Pre K-2, 3-5, 6-8
 - Change to Pre K-3, 4-8
 - Change to Pre K-1, 2-4, 5-8
 - Change to Pre K-1, 2-5, 5-8
 - Prek-5, 6-8, 9-12

Other comments:

- K – tough age to have so many indicators
- Helpful to have K-8 stepped

3. What challenges have you faced implementing the standards?

- Do not like indicators; like them as suggestions, but find them to be randomly specific
- Present less, but more in depth
- An awful lot in an increasingly shrinking time
- Too many benchmarks and indicators to address them all at any level
- Difficult for me to work by grade level as they are listed; I find I do some things for 6th grade that are requirements for 7th grade and vice versa

- The ability to get all the expectations covered in a semester is daunting; could these be clustered or grouped in a reduced structure?

- Multi-ages in same class
- Can we create a state-suggested teaching objectives list? Check out Mississippi State
- Can't possibly cover standards for 8th grade because of testing; timing is troublesome in the second semester
- We have a lot to learn from general classroom teachers
 - Rigor, relevance, and relationships
 - We arts folks need to be fluid and not put up barriers with other conventional teachers
 - Arts teachers need to take a leadership role, don't be marginal
 - We're not just arts educators, we're educators
- Has to have curriculum map for entire year to follow standards; no room for flexibility
- Standards end up being retrofitted
 - You have an idea then go back to the standards
 - Can't hit all of them without enough time in the year

4. What is your opinion of the developmental appropriateness of the current indicators?

- Some of the H.S. indicators are on a higher level than they are ready to achieve
- Some of the upper level benchmarks are higher, but I like them as a reaching point
- 9-12 should definitely allow for developmental growth in the skills of specific media
- Principles of design should be broken up; we don't do them formally in 1st grade. The benchmarks are so vague that continuity is an issue. How do I know that something has been previously covered? A little more structure is needed.
- Student-centered, student choice curricula; teacher-driven, cookie cutter projects are a thing of the past (especially with push of 21st century skills)

5. Have you found the current standards to be redundant in any way?

- Some are used over and over, e.g., demonstrate skill in use of art materials and tools
- There is a lot of overlap within the K-4 standards
- All overlap; some aesthetic analysis will overlap criticism; that is fine.
- Aesthetics – valuing arts – overlap greatly with art criticism; need to combine. You cannot have a meaningful art criticism discussion or reflection without addressing value conceptually.
- There needs to be suggested teaching objectives to guide curriculum development at a district level.
- Pointed out repetitive nature of the indicators, but also defended that as part of process.

6. Content gaps?

- Local environment
- Child-centered
- Computer graphics
- Art careers
- Critical thinking
- Initiative

- Self-reflection
- Flexibility/adaptability
- Leadership
- Technology—and tech specific to theatre and music production; “industry standards.
- Common Core
- Tech Prep
- 21st century skills
- Multicultural and global emphasis

7. Other comments (format)

- Can the standards be electronic rather than a big book?
 - Clickable PDF; would be great to only print the grade levels I teach
 - Electronic link to each standard
- Be careful about using hot topic words so don’t become irrelevant
- Find a nifty visual map
- Need icons to help me use them
- Challenges inherent in disparities among facilities and funding in school districts
- Topics-based vs. current model

Comments brought forth looking at standards through a conceptual lens

- Creative, inventive, self-expression
- Will five areas/standards be maintained regardless of names for them?
- Provide goals that dovetail with other core subjects in a more measurable way
- Performance-based assessment/test (not just pencil and paper)
- Process of idea development and execution of communicating ideas effectively through innovative creative processes
- Perception and sensory engagement should be emphasized

Looking through a political lens

- Money—how many school districts can afford to have a dance teacher
- Several mentions of what focus of standards is: descriptive/prescriptive; inward/outward; broad for masses or narrow for student vocation?
- Unlike other subject areas, there are no assessment procedures for art—is there recognition for graduating with an art certificate?
- Promote and develop awareness to help create a supportive environment for arts education (media, literature, advertising, promote arts then 21st c. learning skills)
- Share with all school districts the recommended required amount of art class contact time per year
- Why aren’t we the forerunners of the eight habits of mind?
- Guidelines for community and how its involvement can help children to experience arts enrichment