



### Introduction

Iowa's Fine Arts Standards seek to establish rigorous expectations for excellence in teaching and learning in the arts. Process-based pedagogy empowers students with the knowledge and skills to engage their imaginations, ask authentic questions, and solve problems creatively in order to understand, serve, and innovate in their communities. Iowa's Fine Arts Standards, derived from the National Core Arts Standards (2014), unite the arts disciplines—dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts—through a common language and framework of four artistic processes and eleven anchor standards. The goal of this document is to provide a lens through which to view, understand, and implement Iowa's Fine Arts Standards.

### Artistic Literacy

A foundation of Iowa's Fine Arts Standards is to promote and develop artistically literate learners. Artistic literacy is the knowledge and understanding needed to engage in the arts. According to the National Coalition of Core Arts Standards, "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". The National Core Arts Standards represent a departure from a traditional, product-oriented approach to arts education. Instead of underscoring a final performance or work of art, the emphasis is on the artistic processes one engages in when fully participating in the arts. When engaged in the artistic processes—creating, performing/producing/presenting, responding, and connecting—students grow not just in the making of art, but in their abilities to reflect, communicate, critique, and construct meaning.

### How to Read Iowa's Fine Arts Standards

Four artistic processes and eleven anchor standards are common across each of the five fine arts disciplines. Each discipline, then, has distinct, discipline-specific performance standards that stem from the all-encompassing artistic processes and anchor standards. *The eleven anchor standards have varied weight or importance depending on the arts discipline and are not intended to be implemented equally.* For instance, a visual art classroom may be primarily engaged in the creating process, while also responding, connecting, and presenting periodically throughout a unit of study. Districts are advised to consider this notion when writing curriculum across diverse fine arts disciplines.

The four artistic processes—creating, performing/presenting/producing/, responding, and connecting—are not meant to be mechanically utilized in a linear and regular progression. All four processes do not need to be present in each unit of study, but used cyclically throughout each school year as dependent upon the learning objectives at hand.

The National Core Arts Standards focus on conceptual understanding. This is a departure from the 1994 National Standards for Music and National Standards for Arts Education, which consisted primarily of knowledge and skills. The new standards provide a framework for developing student independence and artistic literacy.

The National Core Arts Standards were written using a backwards design approach. Throughout the standards development process, the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework, co-created by Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins, assisted educators in identifying important learning outcomes, determining evidence of attainment, and designing the best path for achieving those desired results. The National Core Arts Standards were developed using the UbD framework as a major design driver. Jay McTighe, along with visual arts educator Daisy McTighe, provided early guidance to standards writing chairs as well as additional assistance on Model Cornerstone Assessments.

The “Enduring Understandings” and “Essential Questions” are the big ideas and inquiries that underlie each standard. Enduring Understandings summarize key ideas that are paramount to each fine arts discipline and are meant to be retained, transferred and synthesized beyond a unit of study. Essential Questions work in tandem with the Enduring Understandings to guide students in their learning. In *Understanding by Design* (ASCD, 2005), Wiggins and McTighe explain that the aim of Essential Questions is to “stimulate thought, to provoke inquiry, to spark more questions...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”.

## How to Use Iowa’s Fine Arts Standards

Iowa’s Fine Arts Standards are recommended standards. They are the culmination of the hard work and dedication of our statewide Fine Arts Adoption Team and also honor the work of the National Coalition of Core Arts Standards. They are largely based upon the National Core Arts Standards, national standards which are highly regarded and have been rigorously vetted. The goal of the Iowa’s Fine Arts Standards is to provide statewide guidance for fine arts education and support the creation and implementation of high-quality local fine arts curricula.

Iowa’s Fine Arts Standards are broadly articulated to allow for a variety of presentations based on individual student needs and abilities. Full access to the standards by all students, regardless of disabilities, was considered in the design to enable fine arts teachers to facilitate the achievement of students with disabilities at the same levels expected for all students. For guidelines on using Iowa’s Fine Arts Standards with students with disabilities:

<http://www.nationalartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/Guiding%20Principles%20White%20Paper%20.pdf>

## Assessment

As previously noted, the five fine arts disciplines are united under four artistic processes and eleven anchor standards. Numerous performance standards which are discipline specific and vertically aligned appear in the standards documents for each fine arts discipline. It is important to note that each teacher need not formally assess each individual performance standard (For example, *Cr1.1.2a*) each grading period. It is, however, important, for every teacher to be sure to formally assess standards under each artistic process (for example, *Create*).

The Model Cornerstone Assessments included in the National Core Arts Standards ([www.nationalartsstandards.org](http://www.nationalartsstandards.org)) are a collection of assessment resources and can be used by Iowa arts educators to create assessments to best fit their needs and their individual district needs.

Assessment of the standards may vary and include student self-evaluations, artist statements, formative and summative peer critiques, informal teacher observation of student work, rubric-based scoring of finished student work, etc.

## Discipline-Specific Statements

### Dance

Dance in public education is often taught and experienced in physical education, music, foreign language, and social studies courses. Because there are currently no dance specialists identified for Iowa schools and no dance teaching certifications available, educators, both in-school and out of school, help our students understand dance. This document provides educators working with students of dance in public education, whether in curricular or extracurricular settings, a framework for that understanding.

What should our students know and experience in dance before they graduate from the school system?

- Students will develop a positive body image and movement skills so that they are able to move efficiently and effectively in space and time; clearly express ideas; and continue lifelong movement participation.
- Students will create movement phrases using a variety of stimuli. They will learn to make choices when creating.

- Students will develop a physical and verbal vocabulary so that they can notate and discuss what they do and see.
- Students will view many genres of dance. Using guiding questions, they will be able to discuss these dances in a literate manner and they will become informed audience members.
- Students will experience and understand dance in world cultures. Students will experience community through dance.

Dance education includes the discipline of learning movement skills, the creation of work both individually and collaboratively, and the development of the ability to respond critically. Dance is essentially a collaborative art form, naturally engaging with other art forms and other academic subjects. Dance, therefore, lends itself to a foundation not just for learning, but for being.

### Media Arts

Media arts, as defined by the National Endowment for the Arts, includes screen-based projects presented via film, television, radio, audio, video, the Internet, interactive and mobile technologies, video games, transmedia storytelling, and satellite as well as media-related printed books, catalogues, and journals.

- Media arts encompasses a variety of arts areas and is a developing field with continuously changing technology.
- Media arts reflects contemporary practices and expands the reach of arts education.
- Media arts includes but is not limited to video and film, animation, and sound production.
- A major focus of the media arts strand of standards is crafting thoughtful communication and messaging between artist and intended audiences.

### Music

Music is an essential and enriching part of our lives. Performing, creating, and responding to music can connect communities and foster personal growth and meaning. Music educators enable students not only to perform as effective musicians, but to improve their quality of life through the appreciation and engagement with the arts as lifelong participants, appreciators, and consumers.

- The five distinct strands of music standards serve to guide schools offering diverse course offerings beyond traditional music: General Music; Traditional and Emerging Ensembles; Harmonizing Instruments; Music Composition and Theory; and Music Technology. The different strands for music both recognize the universal artistic processes while also supporting the unique learning that is inherent to each setting.
- In general music settings, an emphasis on creating and responding to music is developmentally appropriate in a curriculum addressing all four artistic processes. In school districts where concerts for general music students are required, it is recommended that these concerts serve to inform the community of the learning within the general music curriculum, rather than performing repertoire that serves only a performance function. Additional avenues to publicly showcase student learning may include classroom visits or parent nights.
- Music ensembles (instrumental groups, choirs, or combined ensembles) naturally have a greater emphasis on the artistic process of performing. However, creating, responding, and connecting should also be included in the curriculum for these groups. Though the balance will naturally lead toward the performance process in ensemble settings, a curriculum that touches on all four artistic processes will provide a deeper level of understanding and appreciation for our music students.
- The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) has created a chart comparing the 1994 Music National Standards to the 2014 National Core Arts Standards. This document clearly articulates the fundamental differences in focus, structure, outcomes, and format between the two sets of standards: [https://nafme.org/wp-content/files/2014/11/StandardsComparison\\_REVISED2.pdf](https://nafme.org/wp-content/files/2014/11/StandardsComparison_REVISED2.pdf)

## Theatre

Theatre education enhances verbal and nonverbal communication of ideas, increases a student's ability to effectively collaborate, and provides an outlet for generating, sharing, and utilizing creative choices. Through guided risk-taking in class, improvisation with others, and performances before an audience, students' self-confidence and self-expression grows. Developing different characters and considering varying points of view fosters students' empathy and understanding of diverse perspectives.

- Opportunities to learn about theatre and drama through participation in work not intended for an audience has merit and value, and for that reason should be a key component of a theatre arts program and curriculum.
- Students should have opportunities to view and respond to theatre work produced outside of their immediate school community. Experiences that take students to theatre productions and/or opportunities to bring productions to schools are an important component of theatre arts programming and curriculum.
- While theatre professionals recognize the role that dramatic texts play in Literacy studies, the study of dramatic literature is NOT the study of theatre. Certified theatre educators should lead drama experiences, teach theatre specific courses, and direct theatre performance opportunities. Local districts are encouraged to outline where theatre opportunities are available to students, engage all stakeholders in the curriculum writing process, and work to ensure that theatre instruction and productions are offered under the guidance of appropriately trained, prepared, and/or certified educators.
- Likewise, the use of process-based theatre and drama participation in support of learning other academic subjects (language arts, social studies, etc.) does not fulfill the intent of these standards, which is to provide students with sequential and ongoing study in drama and theatre.
- Co-curricular participation in drama and theatre is recognized as a valuable learning opportunity. Individuals directing these events (school production, speech team, etc.) are strongly encouraged to use the standards in structuring, developing, and evaluating these programs.
- Organizations that host, design, train judges, and develop guidelines for competitive theatre and drama activities are encouraged do so in alignment with standards.

## Visual Arts

A comprehensive and robust visual arts curriculum will actively engage students in their own learning to develop concepts and skills through sensory awareness, aesthetic discrimination, and authentic, creative production tasks. In a rigorous process-driven vs. product-driven curriculum supported by Iowa's Fine Arts Standards, students should:

- Acquire universal skills important to lifelong success, such as communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving.
- Formatively and continually reflect upon their own and others' artistic processes, learning how intent, artistic choices, visual media, and communication influence one another.
- Be encouraged to discover that multiple solutions exist within an artistic problem, therefore fostering innovation and creative practice.
- Examine diverse local and world art cultures and histories.
- Bolster social-emotional learning for themselves and others through studio environments supported by peer critiques and collaborative inquiry.

## Access to the Arts for All Iowa's Students

The arts offer a unique outlet for personal expression that transcends the spoken and written word. All students should have access to art, music, theatre, dance, and media arts education regardless of demographic reference group, school setting (urban, suburban or rural), or district configuration. Fine arts educators should be aware of the diversity of experiences and communities of students whom they serve and should be equally aware of their own identities and cultural biases to promote culturally inclusive learning experiences.

Access to quality programs is paramount to student achievement in the arts. In developing fine arts curricula and benchmarks for student progress, districts should consider the access provided to students to enable necessary progress toward district goals. While time is the most valuable resource toward most endeavors, districts should also regularly assess the human and physical supports provided that are necessary to a continually improving arts education for students.

## Professional Development Resources

Resources around Iowa's Fine Arts Standards will be developed and accessible on the Iowa Department of Education's fine arts page: <https://www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/content-areas/fine-arts>

Additionally, the following fine arts associations and organizations provide standards-aligned professional development opportunities for fine arts educators in our state:

- Art Educators of Iowa
- Augustana Orff
- First Iowa Orff
- Greater Des Moines Orff Chapter
- Iowa Alliance for Arts Education
- Iowa Arts Council
- Iowa Bandmasters Association
- Iowa Choral Directors Association/American Choral Directors Association
- Iowa Dance Network
- Iowa High School Music Association
- Iowa High School Speech Association
- Iowa Music Educators Association/National Association for Music Education
- Iowa Percussive Arts Society
- Iowa String Teachers Association/American String Teachers Association
- Iowa Thespians
- Jazz Educators of Iowa
- Kodaly Educators of Iowa
- Sioux Valley Orff Chapter

## Closing

The fine arts are an inclusive and natural vehicle for self-expression, understanding, critical thinking, and community-building. The arts can serve as a light that illuminates students' understanding of themselves, their beliefs, their experiences, and their value in our world.

Iowa's Fine Arts Standards are the result of careful consideration of highly vetted and regarded national standards, as well as determinations about the diverse needs of students and educators of fine arts in our state. The standards are specific but flexible and allow for teachers to meet the needs of their students in unique, creative, and thoughtful ways. Additionally, for the first time, the new standards unite all fine arts disciplines with a common framework and language and highlight the importance of artistic processes inherent to all of the arts. The adoption of Iowa's Fine Arts Standards will drive academic excellence, provide a rigorous framework for accomplished arts instruction, and furnish a context for evaluation that supports complex creative thinking and expression.