

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

Position Statement on the Implementation of the Connecticut Arts Standards
Adopted October 5, 2016

“The arts' position in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults believe is important.”
(Elliot W. Eisner)

Introduction

The Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE) believes that arts learning should occur through education focused on the whole child in order to promote artistically-literate citizens well equipped with the creativity, communication, and critical thinking skills needed to live rich, meaningful lives. The CSBE further believes that all Connecticut public schools must provide for challenging and rigorous programs of study in the arts across all grade levels. As such, Connecticut recommends fully adopting the National Core Arts Standards in its online platform as the Connecticut Arts Standards. The web-based platform allows Connecticut educators to create a customizable handbook with selected relevant standards, while also providing access to national tools and resources. This position statement articulates the lens through which to view the national standards and provides guidance for implementation across the State of Connecticut.

Goal: Artistic Literacy for All Students in Connecticut

The Connecticut Arts Standards set the guidelines for schools, districts, teachers and communities to develop artistically literate citizens. An artistically literate citizen has the knowledge, skills, and understanding to actively engage in the arts throughout their lives. This citizen has practice in processes unique to each of the five art's disciplines: dance, media arts, music, theatre and visual arts. Although each arts' discipline shares common goals written as anchor standards, the approach for each needs to include the development of discipline-specific techniques and skills through the artistic processes of creating, performing/producing/presenting, responding, and connecting. The creation of art remains central as students focus on imagining, investigating, constructing, and reflecting on the world and their relationship to it. Engaging the arts in such a way allows individuals to develop and eventually attain their true creative potential while fostering a deeper understanding of what binds us together as human beings artistically, culturally, socially, and emotionally. Artistic literacy cultivates the crucial skills necessary for student success as Connecticut looks towards its social and economic future.

Implementing the Connecticut Arts Standards

The CSBE recommends local districts adopt the online platform and tools as presented on the National Core Arts Standards Web site located at <http://www.nationalartsstandards.org/>. As educators build programming around these standards, it is important for all stakeholders in Connecticut to consider the following:

- The National Coalition of Core Arts Standards carefully crafted 11 common anchor standards that are the same for each of the five arts disciplines. Each artistic discipline has foundational knowledge and skills integrated throughout these standards. Each of the 11 standards has varied weight or importance in each arts discipline; therefore it is important for districts to consider this when writing curriculum in each discipline.
- The National Core Arts Standards have been written using a method of backwards design process called Understanding by Design (UbD) (Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, 2005). Though

districts need not use UbD when writing curriculum in Connecticut, it is important for curriculum writers to note the framework. In the standards, enduring understandings and essential questions connect the anchor standards to the process components. Local districts do not have to adopt these enduring understandings and essential questions as a part of their curriculum. However, they may serve as a resource when writing curriculum.

- The Model Cornerstone Assessments included in the National Core Arts Standards serve as a resource for Connecticut arts educators in creating assessments and establishing benchmarks of student work aligned with individual district needs.
- The Connecticut Arts Standards are to be used in the writing and implementation of strong, local curriculum across the state, keeping in mind that arts standards are intended to promote creativity.
- The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) will collect and develop resources to support rigorous implementation of the Connecticut Arts Standards. Resources will include, but not be limited to: samples of model curriculum and lesson plans, sample Student Learning Objectives, glossaries, exit standards, connections to Common Core State Standards, student work samples, and guidance in the understanding and writing of essential questions and enduring understandings.
- As Connecticut districts look toward implementing the Connecticut Arts Standards, state funded professional development opportunities during the initial rollout years will provide teachers with the support to embed skills-based instruction within the framework of conceptual thinking.
- The four artistic processes of creating, performing/presenting/producing, responding, and connecting are grounded in the in-depth experiences of the “making” and “doing” inherent in the arts. It should be noted that each process need not be present in every lesson or unit. These processes should be incorporated cyclically to ensure each student experiences them at some time in the arts classroom.
- The breadth of goals and skills acquired is directly correlated with the number and type of resources provided at the school level. Each district will determine the vertical alignment of the 11 anchor standards with consideration given to available resources such as student time on task in the arts, number of arts staff, funding, available adequate classroom space, equipment, and other determining factors.
- The Connecticut Arts Standards allow for artistic mediums and styles yet to be envisioned. As society evolves and changes, forms of expression through the arts change and evolve as well. The standards allow for curriculum to include these new forms of expression.
- District administrators, particularly those evaluating arts educators, need to have a deep understanding of artistic processes and the ways they present themselves in classroom settings in order to provide supportive and valuable feedback. Administrators without this understanding should seek professional learning opportunities in order to best meet the needs of their arts staff in the evaluative process.

Excellence in Arts Programs

The following outlines essential criteria for the building of high-quality arts programs.

- A comprehensive arts education provides experiences in each of the five artistic subjects (dance, media arts, music, theatre and visual arts) in a balanced and sequential manner that is vertically aligned and explores each area through the lens of the artistic processes of creating, performing/presenting/producing, responding and connecting.
- Student time in arts classes should reflect that the arts are an indispensable and integral part of a complete, competitive education for Connecticut’s students.

- All students should have access to a quality arts education regardless of demographic reference group, school setting (urban, suburban or rural) or district configuration.
- Arts educators should have access to the materials and equipment needed to adequately deliver arts instruction for tomorrow’s citizens.
- One of the core artistic processes is presenting/performing/producing. For this standard to “live” in our school districts as it should, dedicated arts spaces for arts classes, displays, concerts, performances, theatre/dance productions and digital production should be made available to students and educators.
- An important component of the Connecticut Arts Standards is the inclusion of five distinct art forms (dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts) centered around 11 common anchor standards. This collaborative view across all of the arts disciplines provides common language that can be shared and understood among the various stakeholders in schools, community, and the public in general. These common anchor standards give a new and unique lens that will serve to empower us as we move towards the incorporation of these standards.
- Students with learning differences should have equal opportunities to participate in the arts. There is a resource on the National Core Arts Standards Web site that addresses this topic through the Universal Design Model.
- Students who are English learners should have equal opportunities to participate in the arts. The arts offer a unique outlet for personal expression that transcends the spoken and written word, and assist students in English language literacy while allowing them to be “fluent” in their ability to communicate their ideas.

Discipline-Specific Considerations

Dance

- Along with certified dance educators teaching dance courses, dance is often embedded in the music or physical education curriculum, but not addressed as a unique arts discipline. Local districts should outline where dance opportunities are available to students throughout their K-12 experience, engaging all stakeholders in the curriculum writing process.
- Dance instruction requires a sequentially developed, guided kinesthetic skill set that recognizes the body as an instrument.
- Consideration should be given to how English learners and other students with particular needs can reach developmental milestones through dance.

Media Arts

- Because media arts encompasses multiple areas of expertise, it is important that each district develop an understanding of this newly identified arts discipline.
- Local districts should outline where media arts opportunities are available to students throughout their K-12 experience.
- Media arts encompasses multiple areas of expertise including, but not limited to: animation, cinema, video and film, digital sound design and production, imaging design, interactive design, virtual design, game design, photography, digital photography, and graphic design. Because all of these areas are connected to aesthetics and foundational skills, they should be firmly embedded in the arts standards. As College Board states “. . . they do not stand alone or fit into another category (technology education, for example).”
- All district stakeholders in media arts should have a voice in the curriculum writing process emphasizing the role of media literacy and technology for our students today.

Music

- Music ensembles naturally have a greater emphasis on the artistic process of performing. That said, creating, responding, and connecting should also be included in the curriculum for these

groups. Though the balance will lean toward performance due to course time constraints, a curriculum that touches on all of these processes will provide a richer level of understanding for our music students.

- Music classes provide natural pathways for inclusion of special education students. When a regular music classroom cannot serve as the least restrictive environment, adaptive music classes for high needs special education students should be considered as part of the music educator's schedule along with professional development to prepare teachers for adaptive classrooms.
- Music educators should be aware of the wide array of differences in the identities and communities of their students. Educators should be equally aware of their own identity and community bias to promote teaching perspectives that are culturally inclusive.

Theatre

- Along with certified theatre educators teaching theatre courses, theatre opportunities for students oftentimes emerge within other disciplines such as English language arts or music. Local districts should outline where theatre opportunities are available to students districtwide and engage all stakeholders in the curriculum writing process.
- Curriculum in theatre education consists of rigorous units of study to provide students with strong foundational skills. Districts should be aware that staging productions without prior theatre instruction does not promote the building of strong foundational skills.
- Drama can have a profound impact on literacy development and inclusion of drama in early childhood education is an opportunity to meet standards in both the Connecticut Arts Standards and the Connecticut Core Standards in literacy.

Visual Arts

- When writing visual arts curriculum, it is important there is a connection to foundational skills and knowledge using the elements and principles of design.
- “Curating” and “sharing across time and culture” are new additions to the national standards. When implementing this in a curriculum, consider the need for an awareness or understanding of how to explore this best.
- The act of creating art can also be considered a response to a prompt. The artistic process of responding can include written, aural and visual creations.
- Maintaining a balance between self-expression and the role of the audience is important in the development of visual arts curriculum.

Closing Statement

Active engagement in the artistic processes as defined by the Connecticut Arts Standards allows students to develop and realize their own creative potential while acquiring lifelong skills in creative thinking, social and emotional awareness, collaborative work, effective communication, logical reasoning, and meta-cognition. These skills and experiences have been identified as key characteristics for lifelong learners and have a powerful and positive effect far beyond the arts experience.

The arts have a unique ability to communicate the ideas and emotions of the human spirit. They connect to our history, culture, traditions and heritage. They are an essential part of what it means to be a human being, and enhance our ability to express ideas and emotions. The goal of CSBE is to develop students who are artistically literate, and the effective implementation of the Connecticut Arts Standards is a key component of doing so. To that end, the following policy guidance is recommended to support the use of the Connecticut Arts Standards in developing artistic literacy.

Proposed Policy Guidance for Position Statement on the Implementation of the Connecticut Arts Standards

The Connecticut State Board of Education, in its 2016 *Position Statement on the Implementation of the Connecticut Arts Standards*, calls for arts learning that supports the whole child by creating artistically-literate citizens well equipped with the creativity, communication, and critical thinking skills needed to live rich, meaningful lives. The following guidelines are recommended to support the implementation of the Connecticut Arts Standards in our schools:

Department of Education's Responsibilities

- Support and promote an equity of arts learning, opportunities, and resources for all students in Connecticut.
- Provide a vision and policy for Prekindergarten through Grade 12 arts learning aligned with college-entry requirements inclusive of recommended resources for achieving high standards in the arts.
- Provide ongoing, in-depth professional learning on the Connecticut Arts Standards for all Connecticut arts educators.
- Recognize and disseminate relevant resources: high-quality curriculum from a sampling of diverse districts; sample lesson plans; information on evaluating arts educators; research on best practices regarding artistic-literacy instruction; and other educator resources unique to Connecticut.
- Ensure arts educators hold the appropriate certificate for their assignment.
- Provide guidance on implementing the standards associated with the new art form of media arts.
- Partner with the community, higher-education institutions, businesses, and industries to develop the whole child with a focus on arts learning.

School Districts' Responsibilities:

- Ensure equity of arts learning, opportunities, and resources for all students in the district.
- Develop or select district-level curriculum for all five arts disciplines.
- Implement high-quality sequential arts curriculum, instruction, and assessments aligned with the Position Statement on the Implementation of the Connecticut Arts Standards.
- Designate a district-level leader to assist with implementing curriculum, professional learning, and arts-specific programs.
- Provide all teachers and students with high-quality instructional resources to develop artistic literacy.
- Provide administrators, teachers, and staff members with professional development opportunities focused on discipline-specific instructional practices and cross-content connections.
- Provide arts educators collaborative time to develop high-quality arts lessons and formative and summative assessments.
- Allow sufficient time in the school day for developing artistic literacy.
- Ensure the vertical development of artistic literacy from Prekindergarten through Grade 12.
- Encourage community participation in arts events during and beyond the school day.
- Provide access to arts resources to underserved students (i.e., support with renting an instrument, attaining necessary visual arts materials, support with access to technology needed

to participate in media arts and other expenses incurred by participating students that are outside the regularly supplied classroom tools).

Administrators' Responsibilities, Prekindergarten through Grade 12:

- Create a culture that embraces artistic expression throughout the school.
- Provide quality instructional materials and supporting technology at all levels.
- Provide teachers and staff members' opportunities for arts-specific professional learning.
- Recruit and educate arts teacher leaders to coordinate and support arts instruction.
- Communicate to families and communities information regarding the arts curriculum, instructional methods, and expectations for student learning.
- Support and participate in district partnerships to promote artistic literacy.

Educators' Responsibilities:

- Execute the district arts curriculum.
- Seek professional learning opportunities from diverse providers that promote reflection.
- Plan and implement rigorous instruction to support student understanding and application of artistic concepts and skills.
- Provide frequent and varied opportunities for students to create, perform/present/produce, respond and connect.
- Use formative and summative assessments to monitor student achievement and adjust instruction.
- Serve as role models for creative and artistic expression.

Families' and Community Members' Responsibilities:

- Support the creation of student work by attending performances, exhibitions, and classroom presentations.
- Encourage children's interest in the arts.
- Use community resources to increase children's access to arts experiences.

Higher Education Institutions' Responsibilities:

- Provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to understand artistic literacy across content areas and perform fieldwork in urban, suburban and rural districts as part of their degree programs.
- Design programs that yield artistically literate graduates.
- Produce high-quality research focused on arts instruction, learning, resources, and assessment.
- Develop collaborative partnerships with schools and districts and communities.

Business and Industry Stakeholders' Responsibilities:

- Develop ongoing, collaborative partnerships with schools, teachers, students, and families to support and enhance arts programming.
- Provide mentoring and internships for teachers and students.
- Supply information about the importance of artistic literacy in relation to the state's creative economy.
- Publicize programming and performances as appropriate to increase access for all stakeholders.