

Summary of College Board Research

Study: College Standards Review

The first phase of research 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. This review offers a general overview of the types of content and ideas that are being emphasized in the arts at the college level, but fewer insights as to what specific student expectations are, or how college-level achievement in the arts is measured.

Study: Child Development Research

In recent years, there has been great interest among educators in the links between arts-based learning and human development. Research initiatives of the past decade have linked arts participation to cognitive growth and academic skills, including the strengthening of long-term memory and reading ability (Gazzaniga et al, 2008), creative thinking skills, and writing fluency (Deasy et al, 2002). Arts participation has additionally been linked to positive social outcomes, including overall engagement in school (Deasy et al, 2002), increased graduation rates (Israel, 2009), and increased community engagement and pro-social activities (Catterall, 2009). In an effort to strengthen research efforts linking arts to overall health and well-being across the lifespan, the National Endowment for the Arts established an interagency task force on the arts and human development in the fall of 2011 (Hanna et al, 2011), ensuring that such research continues to inform and strengthen arts educational practice nationwide.

Although the body of research is growing that links arts participation to ever-widening developmental gains, there appear to be fewer resources available that explain the ways in which the latest research in cognitive, social, and emotional development in children and young adults may inform the instructional practices of arts educators. The following series of literature reviews aims to address the need for this particular type of information: linking current developmental research with recommended best practices for educators of dance, music, theatre, and visual arts students from grades PreK-14.

More specifically, this report is additionally intended as a resource document in the revision of the National Standards for Arts Education, ensuring that these forthcoming goals and

benchmarks for learning in the arts will be developmentally appropriate and aligned with current knowledge in the field.

International Arts Education Standards: A Survey of the Arts Education Standards and Practices of Thirteen Countries and Regions

This report offers compiled and analyzed information on the arts education standards of thirteen countries and regions, including: Australia, Austria, British Columbia, China, Finland, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Scotland, Singapore, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

This survey is not comprehensive, in that researchers did not seek to document every country or region worldwide that may have standards for the arts. Rather, the regions surveyed were specifically requested by members of the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS), with the belief that these particular examples might offer models that will be useful to their development of National Core Arts Standards.

There were additional countries on the list of originally requested regions of focus, but in some cases, they were eliminated from the study because they did not have a published set of national standards or expectations for arts education.

A Review of Selected State Arts Standards

This report has been prepared with the primary purpose of informing the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) in their revision of the National Standards for Arts Education. This document is divided into three separate but related sections, aimed at examining different aspects of current arts education standards in the United States.

The first is a review of recently-revised arts education standards of eight states and districts within the United States. This review includes the standards of all arts disciplines – dance, music, theatre, and visual arts – and examines their overall structure and organization, as well as the content and philosophies guiding the standards.

Arts Standards and 21st Century Skills

In 1994, the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations developed and released the National Standards for Arts Education, the first document to outline in detail what K-12 student should know, understand, and be able to do in dance, music, theatre, and visual arts classes. Sixteen years later, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills released the 21st Century Skills Map for the Arts, designed in partnership with art educators. The document ties specific arts-based outcomes to the 13 habits and abilities known as 21st Century Skills, which include: critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, information literacy, and social and cross-cultural skills, among others. Both of these documents are used widely in

classrooms as guides for planning and assessment, and they have additionally come to be powerful tools for advocacy in the field of arts education.

The College Board analysts undertook the task of performing such an alignment, to determine where the National Standards share similarities with the 21st Century Skills.

A Review of Connections between The Common Core State Standards and The Next Generation Arts Standards

Drawing from the strongest models of state standards nationwide, The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics were released in mid-2010, and have been quickly adopted by almost all 50 states. The stated mission of this initiative is to provide a “consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and career.” Given the central role that the Common Core standards are playing in education and school reform initiatives nationwide, it is a priority of the National Coalition of Core Arts Standards to ensure that the goals and objectives of the Next Generation Arts Standards relate clearly and directly to the Common Core, and that these connections are actively considered as a part of the standards writing process. With that goal in mind, College Board researchers undertook a study of the Common Core standards as they relate to arts-based learning.