

Introduction

In August 2011, The College Board produced a report for the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) as a resource to understand the manner in which the 1994 Standards for Arts Education aligned with the thirteen skills outlined in the 21st Century Skills Map released by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. In coordination with the other arts of Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts, it reviewed the standards for dance included in the 1994 document to provide an informed resource to aid in the development of a new generation of Core Arts Standards...

However, unlike the other three art forms, the dance standards were revised in 2005 by the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO). The 1994 dance standards were developed by the National Dance Association (NDA), one of the six associations under the umbrella of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (AAHPERD). The Alliance focuses on dance as a program within physical education. However, through the recognition of dance as a core art form in education, dance became philosophically and programmatically aligned with the arts. The National Dance Education Organization was formed in 1998 to advance dance as arts education in arts programming. It realized a need to redesign the dance standards to address this Revision also afforded an opportunity to address other issues that had become apparent in the implementation of the 1994 standards.

Unlike the three other arts forms, NDEO created an updated 2005 set of dance standards that have been implemented widely for the past six years by states and districts across the nation. In addition to a greater artistic focus, the ***Standards for Learning and Teaching Dance in the Arts*** redesigned the format of the dance standards to align with the Framework for the *National Assessment of Education Progress*. It used the arts-making processes of Creating, Performing and Responding with the addition of Interconnecting which were apparently more readily accessible for arts educators and so that dance assessments could be more easily developed.

It stands to reason that this current set of national standards should be the document from which to develop Core Standards in Dance Education. The National Dance Education Organization therefore has created the same type of analysis The College Board prepared for the 1994 standards to inform the Dance Task Force about the alignment of the 21st Century Skills to its existing standards. The goal is to learn where the standards share similarities with the 21st Century Skills and where ideas diverge.

However, it was immediately realized the task was a complex endeavor. The 1994 standards are divided into six to nine "Content Standards" for each of the art forms that are different for each art form. They function across the benchmark grades of 4th Grade, 8th Grade, and 12th Grade. A set of graduated "Achievement Standards" are provided for each of the Content Standards in every benchmark grade. The 2005 NDEO standards are organized differently. They are divided into the four arts-making categories of Performing, Creating, Responding, and Interconnecting. Each benchmark grade has approximately 30 achievement standards for each category. It does not contain "Content Standards" as reviewed in The College Board *Gap Analysis*. Whereas The College Board reviews seven Dance Content

Standards for each of the 13 21st Century Skills, this analysis makes a determination for about 90 to 95 Achievement Standards for each Skill category. This has resulted in an extensive report.

It has also resulted in an extremely informative map of dance education. In general, it is apparent that the greatest application of the 21st Century Skills is found in creating dance, responding to dance, and interconnecting dance to other arts and learning. The perfecting of technique to develop the body as an instrument for the art of dance and performance of choreography does not seem to require the same depth of thinking and higher level cognitive skills. This is a major revelation in that most dance programs, both in dance studios and in schools, focus on technical training and the memorization and performance of dances, usually choreographed by the dance teacher or another authority. Improvisation, choreography and composition are often not addressed. Students often do not provide reflective feedback or relate the work to other contexts and learning. It is evident from this analysis that the greatest benefit of critical thinking, creative innovation, communication, and 21st Century skills in general are therefore only minimally promoted in many performance-based dance programs.

This Gap Analysis study therefore accentuates the great need for national standards to ensure that dance programs are addressing the full richness of arts education as an educational process that develops the technically proficient dancer plus the aware and knowledgeable artist. It is hoped that, through review of this analysis, arts educators and educational administrators can be informed about effective standards and determine what is most essential to develop excellent programming in dance education.

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