

History of Minnesota K-12 Art Standards

Arts teachers from around the state gathered to begin writing the first set of Minnesota K-12 art standards in the fall of 1993. When this first set of arts standards went into law in 1996, there was one high school standard for create and perform and one for analysis and interpretation. The same was true for the middle level. Primary and intermediate levels, however, had only one standard that combined creation, performance and responding to art.

There were commitments behind this first set of standards that made no distinction for the individual arts areas although dance, music, theater, and visual arts were named at primary, intermediate and middle school levels while media arts and literature were added to the named list of arts areas at high school level. The first commitment, on the part of arts educators to state policy makers, was that if a broad base of arts experiences was mandated at the elementary and middle school levels, students at the high school level would generally receive instruction in the same concepts, principles and processes no matter what arts area—creative writing, dance, music, theater, media or visual arts—they selected for study as a requirement for high school graduation. The second commitment was to honor both process and product in all arts areas at all grade levels.

During the 2001-02 school year arts teachers from around the state gathered again to begin revision of the K-12 arts standards. Unlike the original teacher groups who wrote the first set of standards, these meetings were divided into the particular arts areas. For example, K-12 music teachers met to review the original standards and revised a new set of standards specifically for music. Dance, theater and visual arts teachers also met by their specific arts areas and also revised new sets of standards for each specific arts area. The belief behind dividing the standards into specific areas was that art teachers from the specific arts understood the importance of standing together to advocate for **arts** education and required **arts** standards not specifically music or visual arts. The understanding was that the arts areas as a collective whole were stronger than any one arts area alone. It appeared that the first set of arts standards that made no distinction among the arts area had accomplished the task of bringing the individual arts areas together to make them a stronger force not only in the K-12 education field but also politically.

The Perpich Center for Arts Education facilitated the development of both the original K-12 arts standards beginning in 1993 and also the revised standards, which went into law in 2003. The Perpich Center brought together not only groups of K-12 classroom teachers to both develop and revise the standards, but also included representatives from post-secondary institutions and teaching artists. Both the original standards and the revised standards, before being sent on to state-level policy makers, were reviewed first by the leadership of the state arts professional organizations and then by a nationally recognized standards expert. The first set of arts standards (along with standards from other content areas) took several years to be developed and go through the process of becoming required by law through the rule-making process. The revised standards, however, became law in 2003 through the legislative process.

The 2003 revised standards were carefully revised to maintain the commitment to honor both process and product and the concept that a high school student, no matter what arts area he or she chose, would receive basically the same instruction in terms of creating, performing in or responding to art. While some individual differences in arts areas are necessary based on the particulars of the arts area, the commitment of maintaining as much as possible of the commonalities is the strength of the arts as a unified content area.

The 2003 revision was also carefully crafted to maintain the direction and general requirements of the original standards to maintain the momentum of implementation across the state. Revisions were made for clarity and specificity. Although the teacher and teaching artist groups who developed the revised standards were well aware that some benchmarks were difficult to implement, they believed that too many individual teachers, schools and districts had invested too much time and energy in implementing the original art standards to significantly change the benchmarks or embark on significantly altered language. One reason these teachers and teaching artists felt they could continue to be committed to the requirements of the original Minnesota standards was that those benchmarks were firmly rooted in the national art standards. One line of reasoning was that if schools chose to adopt the national art standards (rather than Minnesota arts standards), they would be meeting and in some cases going beyond, the Minnesota standard requirements in the arts. The national arts standards still stand as accepted and recognized requirements of what students at all grade levels should know and be able to do.

The Perpich Center has worked with many school districts over the past five years to build a system to evaluate standards-based student learning in the arts. This system is based on the Queensland, Australia model, and two protocols have been developed by Minnesota arts teachers for Minnesota arts teachers. The Standards Audit protocol is a collaborative process that supports a panel of teachers in determining, based on a standard benchmark, what evidence of student learning is present in a collection of student work. The Evaluation Panel protocol is a collaborative process to assist teachers in determining the quality (level of achievement based on a scale of 1 to 4 on a rubric) of the learning in a collection of student work.

More recently Perpich Center staff has begun to work with K-12 arts teachers across the state to align standard benchmarks with classroom level learning goals and a state guideline rubric to develop a statewide system across all arts areas that is built on the work of Rick Stiggins. This alignment process incorporates standard benchmarks into and also honors local school or district curriculums.

The statewide system for evaluating standards-based student learning in arts is a professional development model that invests in teacher learning and develops teacher expertise. This system has been developed to meet the needs of both classroom teachers and school districts in implementing the Minnesota K-12 arts standards. It supports teachers, schools and districts in aligning local curriculum and assessments to state requirements for a quality arts education. It is pragmatic and useable.

The art standards are currently undergoing another revision. This 2008 revision will be made law under the rulemaking process and once in law will be required until 2019.