

2018 Minnesota Arts Standards Foundations Overview

This resource was developed to support educators and administrators in developing curriculum and instruction aligned to the 2018 Academic Standards in the Arts.

Where are foundational knowledge and skills in these standards?

One change in the 2018 arts standards is how foundational knowledge and skills are addressed. The first strand is “Foundations,” and it has one anchor standard: “Use foundational knowledge and skills while responding to, creating, and presenting artistic work.” This standard does not have benchmarks which describe the foundational knowledge and skills. Instead, the foundations are integrated across the benchmarks in the other strands. Text is bolded where foundational knowledge and skills are embedded. This approach acknowledges the foundational role of these building blocks in the arts, and leaves more specific decisions about them up to the local level during curriculum development.

What are the reasons for handling foundations this way?

1. **A vision of artistic literacy guides the structure and content of the standards.** The goal of these arts standards is to support all Minnesota students to become artistically literate. Artistic literacy is “the ability to combine foundational knowledge and skills in an art form with four processes fundamental to the arts: Creating, Performing or Presenting, Responding, and Connecting.” Foundational knowledge and skills are not meant to be taught, learned, and assessed in isolation. Rather, students use and apply them while engaging in the artistic processes.
2. **Arts education is on a path to becoming more culturally relevant and sustaining.** Arts educators are wrestling with the idea that some foundations commonly thought to be universal are actually grounded in a Western and Euro-centric understanding of the arts. This raises important questions about what perspectives, cultures, and art forms might be misunderstood, undervalued, or excluded. For example:
 - In visual arts, Olivia Gude¹ argues that when we use the “Euro-American system” of elements and principles to view and understand artworks from other cultures, “students often do not learn the aesthetic context of making and valuing inherent to the artists and communities who actually created the works... the modernist philosophy of elements and principles privileges formalist Western conceptions over other ways to value and understand art.” (Gude, pp 6-7)

¹ Gude, O. (2004). [*Postmodern Principles: In Search of a 21st Century Art Education*](#), Art Education, 57:1, pages 6-14.

- In music, Juliet Hess² argues that some curricula can “emphasize Western standard musical notation and specific Western constructs for expressing meter, dynamics, and articulations and highlight these elements of music as those musical concepts most essential to learn in schools.” She goes on to explain that popular music and music from other cultures may be shared and passed on in different ways, and “express elements of music differently.” (Hess, pg. 1)

Educators are having similar conversations in all arts areas.

Do you have any tips for addressing foundations in curriculum development?

1. Start with the bolded text in the benchmarks, and be sure to assess those foundations.
2. And a reminder: it is *through* the artistic processes (creating, responding, performing, presenting, and connecting) that students should use the foundations. They are not meant to be taught and assessed in isolation.
3. The 2018 Arts Standards Glossary provides a definition for foundations in each arts area. These definitions are guidance to support educators and districts in fully implementing the “foundations” anchor standard.
4. In some arts areas, educators may need to identify additional foundational knowledge and skills that are necessary for students to achieve all standards and benchmarks. Build those into the curriculum. Attend to learning progressions and scaffold in a way that the foundations support standards-aligned learning.
5. This is also an opportunity to identify less traditional foundations. For example, what habits of mind³ and social-emotional competencies are key to becoming artistically literate? Educators may consider opportunities for alignment with other priorities for students in the district. For example, arts educators in one district identified *perseverance* and *working through failure* as necessary skills for succeeding in arts learning.
6. Use the process of identifying foundational knowledge and skills to critically examine what we teach and why. This is an opportunity to continue to become more culturally relevant and sustaining in curriculum and instruction. Some potential questions to ask are:
 - a. In addition to the foundational knowledge and skills that are commonly taught in U.S. arts education, what others might be important to learn and use as we learn about artistic works from a variety of cultures and time periods?
 - b. If some of our foundational knowledge and skills are grounded in a specific Western cultural perspective, how can we help students understand that that framework can be useful but is not universal?

² Hess, J. (2015). *Decolonizing music education: Moving beyond tokenism*, International Journal of Music Education 33 (3), pages 336-347.

³ President and Fellows of Harvard College on behalf of Project Zero. (2003). *Studio Habits of Mind*. In Hetland, L.; Winner, E.; Veenema, S.; Sheridan, K. (2013). *Studio Thinking 2: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education*. Teachers College Press. Page 6.