



FINE

arts standards



Introduction

Iowa's Academic Standards were created to establish consistency in what students should learn and be able to do from the time they enter school as kindergartners until they graduate. The Iowa Academic Standards covers the areas of science, social studies, English language arts, mathematics and 21st Century skills (employability skills; and civic, financial, health and technology literacy). The intent behind these standards is to give students the skills and knowledge they need to succeed after high school, while still giving each school district's administrators and teachers the ability to make decisions about curriculum and classroom instruction.

In 2013, former Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad issued Executive Order 83, which called for an ongoing review of the state's academic standards to evaluate content and receive feedback from educators to improve student learning. The first phase began in 2015 with a review and update of the science standards.

However, there was one area of students' academic lives that was missing from the standards: fine arts. The fine arts cover the areas of visual art, general music, instrumental music, vocal music, theatre, dance, and media arts.

The National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) describes the arts as a "distinctive vehicle for discovering who we are." The arts saturate daily life at numerous levels. They are responsible for the creative and intellectual means that drive our economy. They give lives meaning through memories and capturing imagination.

Iowa Department of Education Director Ryan Wise convened the Fine Arts Standards Adoption Team in response to public support for statewide standards in the area. The Fine Arts Standards Adoption Team comprised 22 Iowans from a wide range of professional and academic backgrounds related to music, dance, theatre, visual art, and media arts.

The team examined and accepted feedback regarding the National Core Arts Standards, which were developed by the NCCAS, an alliance of national arts and arts education groups. These standards have been highly regarded and widely accepted by state education departments nationwide as a set of fine arts standards for their students in grades preschool through 12th grade. As of October 2017, 22 states have revised their state standards since 2014, and all 22 have used the National Core Arts Standards as the foundation for their work. The team also reviewed feedback via an online public survey and two public forums, which it used to create a final set of recommendations for the Iowa State Board of Education to review.

Iowa's Fine Arts Standards Adoption Team found there was strong support among educators at all grade levels, as well as parents and other members of the community to adopt the National Core Arts Standards. The team did not to make any large-scale changes to NCAS except for minor edits in the areas of general music and theater. These changes were focused on eliminating redundancy and improving clarity.

Process

The Fine Arts Standards Adoption Team was convened in February 2017 and met four times through June 2017.

During the course of four daylong meetings, the adoption team studied the National Core Arts Standards, met with fine arts educators from other states who had implemented the standards and decided how the standards would be implemented in Iowa.

The team was given the following direction:

1. Examine all relevant Fine Arts Standards
2. Create and/or recommend statewide recommended Fine Arts Standards in visual arts, general music, instrumental music, vocal music, theater, dance and media arts
3. Write recommendations about implementation of the standards through professional learning, and materials and resources
4. Offer final recommendations to the State Board of Education

The National Core Arts Standards are a compilation of local, state and national education practices and public policies used to create a guide for how to deliver arts education in the classroom. They use philosophical foundations, lifelong goals, and artistic processes and practices to create voluntary performance standards for what students should attain and the assessments by which their learning can be measured.

Arts standards were not originally included in the early beginnings of national standards work. Several organizations that represented dance, music, theater and visual arts teachers approached the U.S. Board of Education, the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1992 about a grant to begin crafting voluntary national standards for the fine arts.

The result was the National Standards for Arts Education in 1994 that set achievement expectations for students in grades four, eight and 12. The standards were accepted and were used to help shape curricula across the country as states adopted their own state standards. They also challenged art educators to look more thoroughly at their own teaching in the classroom and adjust their practices.

Since the first arts standards were created, many states had revised the arts standards to better fit their goals for their students. NCAS is an updated version of the 1994 arts standards and the 2005 Standards for Learning and Teaching Dance in the Arts and take into account the Common Core State Standards, specifically those for the English language. The 2014 standards include artistic processes and anchor standards, which represent the actions in which learning is realized, and the general knowledge and skills students are expected to demonstrate with their arts education.

Iowa's fine arts adoption team included members with varied backgrounds across the fine arts disciplines. The team considered the past work from NCCAS and looked at revisions several states have made to customize NCAS to meet the needs of their students.

The adoption team valued public input as a critical component to the standards process. The team, with the assistance of Iowa Department of Education staff, crafted an online survey to request feedback about NCAS from Iowa parents, educators and community members. There were more than 1,500 respondents who answered questions to the survey.

The team analyzed the feedback from the online survey to look for consistent areas of agreement or disagreement about the standards as a whole or specific ones, and whether Iowa should consider a voluntary adoption of the standards. The team also examined the responses to four open-ended questions on the survey:

1. What do you find most helpful/useful/important about the statewide recommended Fine Arts Standards?
2. I wish the statewide recommended Fine Arts Standards were more flexible in regards to...
3. How might the statewide recommended Fine Art Standards support the work you are already doing in your school or classroom?
4. What supports do you need to implement any statewide recommended Fine Arts Standards?

Team members used the input from the survey, along with the two public forums, their own discussions within discipline-specific task groups, and their meetings with educators from other states who have already implemented and even revised NCAS, to create their final recommendations to the Fine Arts Standards. NCAS was kept verbatim for all fine arts standards strands except for minor changes in the Theatre and General Music strands. The full team unanimously supported all changes.

Public input findings

Public feedback on the National Core Arts Standards was sought in several ways. An online survey was created and available to the public through the Iowa Department of Education's website. The department posted a press release about the survey and distributed the information to statewide media on April 13, 2017. Team members were asked to help compile a distribution list for prospective survey-takers from their professional networks.

The survey was drafted using some questions from previous standards revision/adoption surveys. Team members and education department employees wanted to include some open-ended questions similar to what Kansas educators had done during their adoption process. Kansas educators shared with Iowa's team members that they gleaned the most information from the open-ended questions in their survey.

Respondents were directed to different questions depending on whether they were a parent/community member or an educator. They were also given the option to end the survey after the first seven questions or could continue to comment on the standards for specific grades or content areas. For each standard, they were given the option to keep it as is, make edits or eliminate, along with an explanation.

The survey covered three general areas:

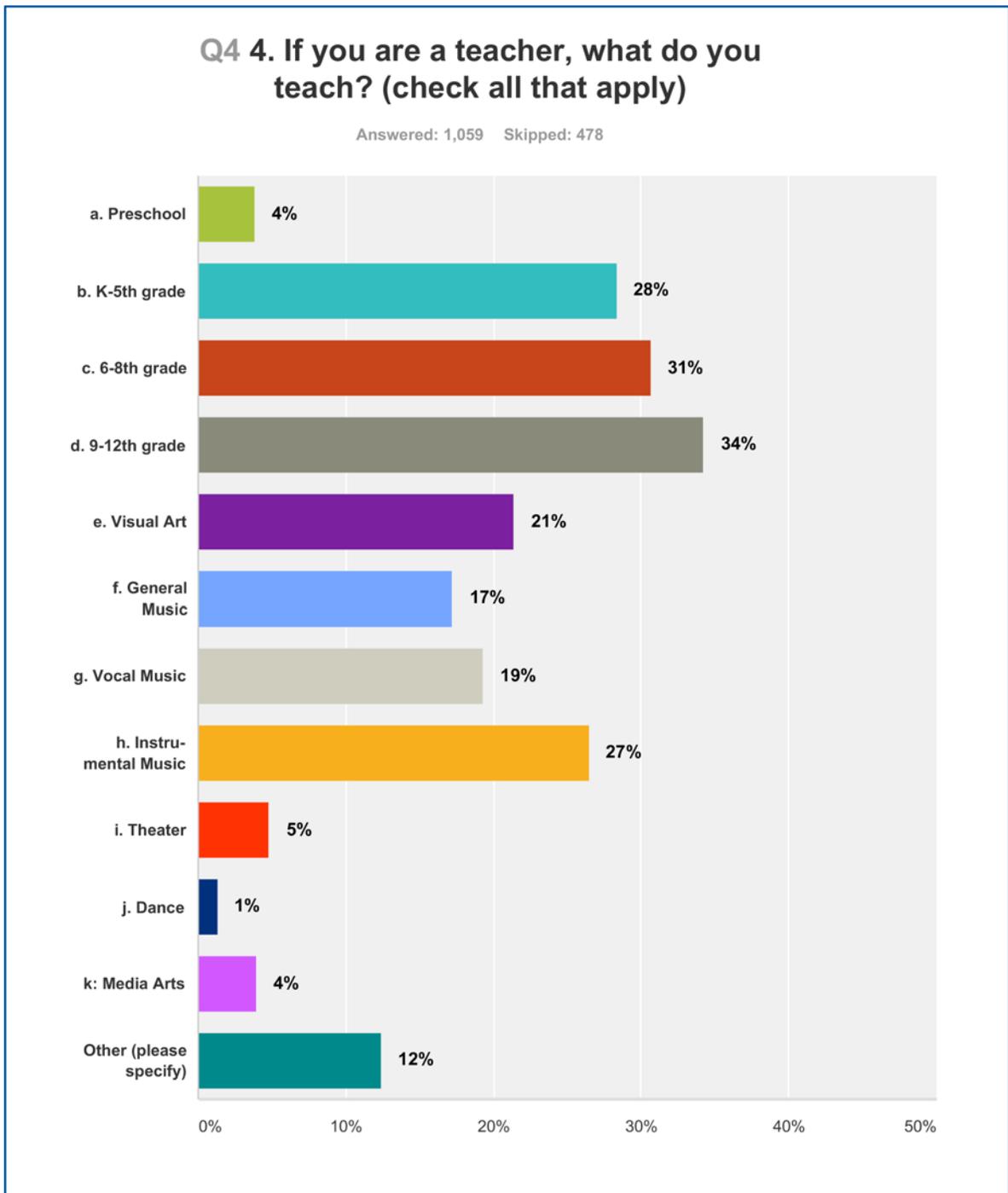
1. Introduction: This included questions about the demographics of the survey-taker and general questions about the standards.
2. Review: Survey-takers were able to choose grade-level standards to review and provide feedback. Within each grade, they could review the individual standards and select to keep the standard as is, suggest a revision or eliminate the standard. Survey-takers could make comments about why a standard should be revised or removed.
3. Feedback: Survey-takers were presented with four open-ended questions about the standards and given an opportunity to explain their thoughts/opinions in regards to them and how they would be implemented in Iowa.

The survey was open online for four weeks. During that time, there were more than 1,500 responses.

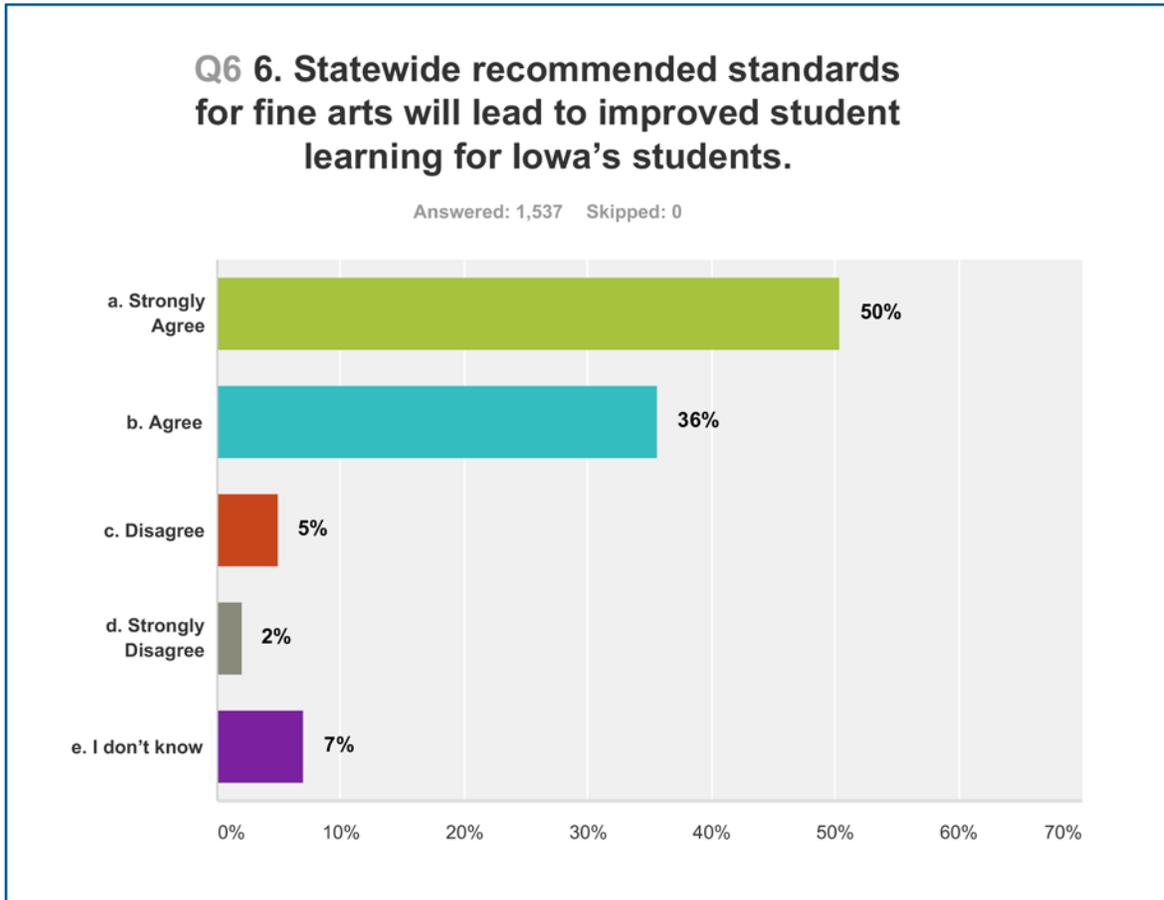
According to the survey data, there was overwhelming support for the Fine Arts Standards and support for how they are currently written. Survey-takers specifically noted they like the connections between careers and content areas, the structure and framework of the standards, the requirements at the middle school level, and the consistency and rigorousness of them. They also thought having standards would validate the fine arts and show the importance and credibility of the arts in education.

A small group of respondents – 100 survey-takers – provided open-ended feedback about why they believed the standards would not lead to improved learning for Iowa's students. Among the responses were there are too many initiatives already and that standards hold back students; that the Fine Arts standards are only recommended and should be required; that they are too general and not specific enough; and that a "one-size-fits-all" approach is too broad for the amount of diversity some school districts have from building to building.

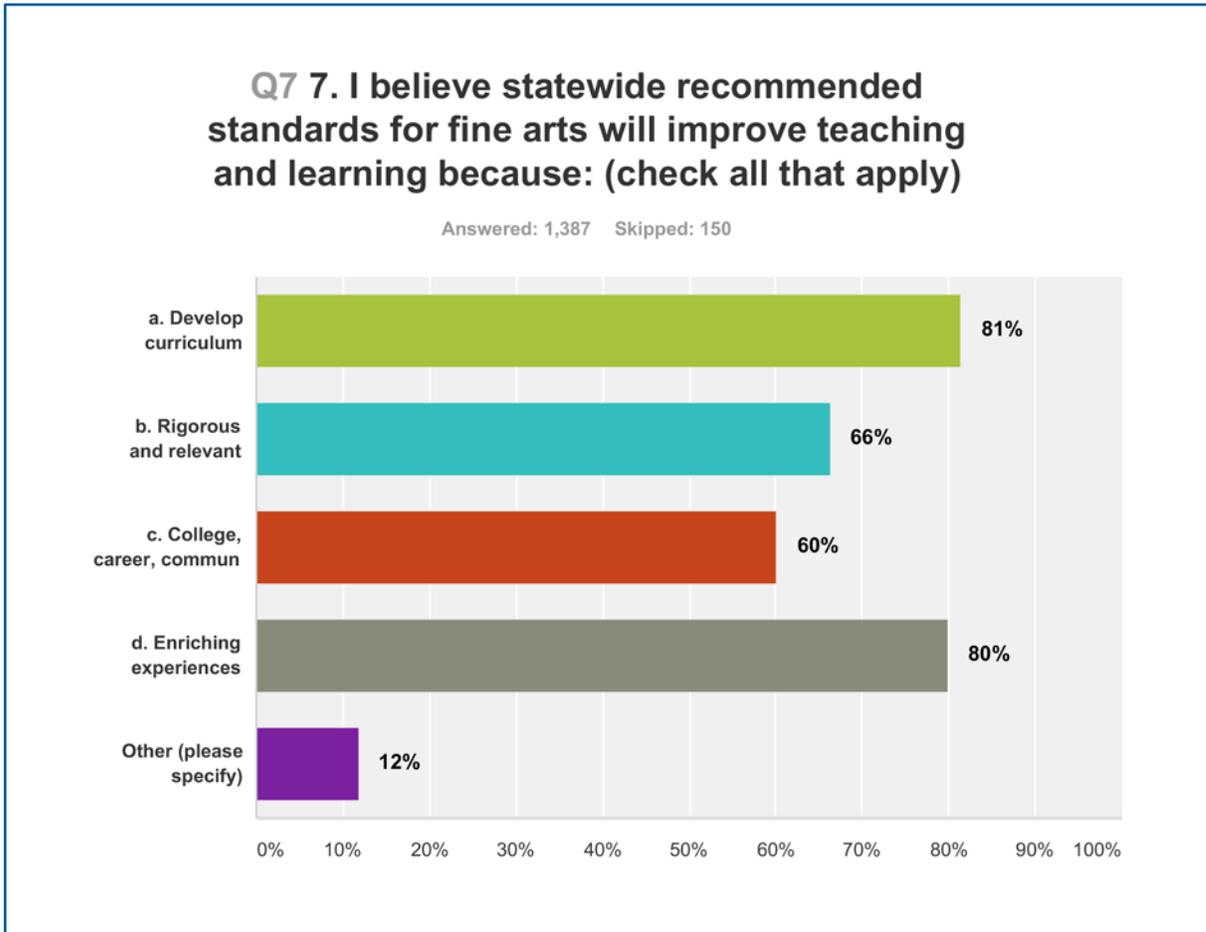
The standards that generated the most requests for edits or elimination were those under visual arts and music. The review team's individual fine arts threads groups discussed each one of the standards under their areas and closely examined the ones that had garnered feedback and the reason behind the response. In some cases, small edits were made to the standard. Between 400 and 600 respondents answered each of the four open-ended questions at the end of the survey.



The majority of survey-takers were teachers (62 percent). Of those who took the survey, the majority teach ninth- through 12th-grade (34 percent) and 27 percent teach instrumental music.



There was overwhelming support for Fine Arts Standards for Iowa. Eighty-six percent of survey-takers either agreed or strongly agreed the standards would improve learning for Iowa's students. There was also overwhelming support for how the standards are organized around the four main artistic processes of creating, presenting/performing/producing, responding and connecting. Ninety-five percent of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed these processes are relevant to fine arts education.



Survey-takers also were asked how they thought the standards would improve teaching and learning in Iowa: 81 percent said they would help develop curriculum; 80 percent think they will enrich the educational experience for students; 66 percent consider them to be rigorous with relevant content; and 60 percent responded they would help the college- and career-readiness.

The state also held public input forums on April 25, 2017, at the Heartland Area Education Agency in Johnston and on April 27, 2017, at the Area Education Agency 267 in Cedar Falls. Both forums were broadcast at nine and then 10 satellite locations throughout the state.

Results from the public forums indicated that teachers around the state were generally familiar with the National Core Arts Standards, regarded them highly, and viewed alignment with national standards positively. Team members received transcripts of the forums' discussion and comments. Each review team meeting also was open to the public, and minutes of each meeting were posted to the education department's website for review.

Conclusion

The Fine Arts Adoption Team has completed its recommendation of the adoption of recommended fine arts standards for Iowa and has adequately considered all public feedback that was received during this process. As a result, the review team puts forth this document as well as a guiding document for recommendation on how to implement the standards to the Iowa State Board of Education for its approval.

Membership

- Gretta Berghammer, University of Northern Iowa
- Dan Black, Red Oak Community School District
- Andrea Christians, Pocahontas Area Community School District
- Ellen Craig, Davenport Community School District
- Michelle Droe, Cedar Falls Community School District
- Mike Fisher, Waterloo Community School District
- Leon Kuehner, Iowa Alliance for Arts Education
- Cindy Herndon, University of Northern Iowa
- Maggie Parks, Marshalltown Community School District
- Anne Pisarik, Washington Community School District
- Kevin Price-Brenner, Dubuque Community School District
- Sarah Schaefer, Waukee Community School District
- Scott Slechta, Fairfield Community School District
- Nate Sletten, Earlham Community School District
- Ronda Sternhagen, Grundy Center Community School District
- Pat Toben, Sioux City Community School District
- Colleen Tomlinson, Rivermont Collegiate
- Kris VerSteegt, Ankeny Community School District
- Matt Walker, Xavier High School
- Valerie Williams, Co'Motion Dance Theater
- Jill Wilson, Luther College
- Yvette Zarod-Hermann, Art Force Iowa