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## National Coalition for Arts Standards

### National Arts Standards Review: Public Input Survey

#### A Report on Selected Preliminary Findings

#### Preliminary Summary

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#### INTRODUCTION

In 2011 the National Coalition for Arts Standards (NCAS) was formed for the purpose of creating new voluntary national arts standards. Previous national arts standards were published in 1994. NCAS consists of professional arts education organizations, including American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE), Americans for the Arts (AFtA), Arts Education Partnership (AEP), Educational Theatre Association (EdTA), National Art Education Association (NAEA), National Association for Media Arts Education (NAMAE), National Association for Music Education (NAfME), National Dance Education Organization (NDEO), Young Audiences Arts for Learning (YA), and members of the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education (SEADAE). These groups banded together to publish National Arts Standards in 2010 for dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts. Teams of discipline-specific arts educators, administrators, artists, and other stakeholders collaborated to write draft standards for each of the arts disciplines. National surveys were conducted to seek input from arts educators, various other stakeholders, and the public on these draft standards. Over 6,000 reviewers responded with contributions. Findings from these surveys were used by the writing teams to revise their draft standards work. In 2014 NCAS published national voluntary standards for arts education and posted them on its website (<https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/>).

Because the NCAS standards are voluntary, states must follow formal regulatory processes for the national standards to become required in a school or school district. Policies, procedures, and timelines varied widely among states. Following publication of the standards, individual states conducted reviews of the standards and determined whether they would *adopt* the standards or holistically implement the standards as written, *adapt* the standards by using them as a foundation or reference for standards development within their states with possible differences in language or structure, or *reject* the standards and use only specialized versions of standards developed within their states. To date, 40 states and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted or adapted the National Arts Standards for use in their schools.

Changes in the general field of education and in the fields of arts education since the publication of these standards raised questions about the efficacy and currency of the standards in guiding and supporting contemporary arts education. To that end, in 2024 NCAS decided to launch a process to gather information about the use and impact of the standards on learning in the arts. The process included development of a national survey of arts educators and other stakeholders to determine levels of impact of the standards on learning in the arts and to ascertain whether the standards needed to be reviewed, revised, or rewritten entirely. A survey instrument was constructed consisting of 15 items. These included six forced-choice demographic information items and nine Likert-style items with open-ended comment boxes for each of those items. Likert items focused on respondents' usage of the standards, their satisfaction with the standards, the standards' impact on learning, and the standards' impact on their teaching practice. Additional Likert-style items focused on the national standards Conceptual Framework document, the Anchor Standards, Artistic Processes, Enduring Understandings, Essential Questions, and Performance Standards. The survey instrument was replicated for use with each of the published sets of arts standards, including Dance, Media Arts, Music-General, Music-Harmonizing Instruments, Music-Traditional and Emerging Ensembles, Music-Composition and Theory Strands, Music-Technology, Theatre, and Visual Arts. Respondents were given the option to select one or more sets of standards for which they could provide input. Each of the NCAS organizations circulated announcements about the survey and provided links through which self-selected voluntary respondents could provide their input. Data collection began in February 2025 and continued through the end of May 2025.

The following report includes summaries of selected preliminary findings from the study. Discussion of the findings or in-depth analyses of the data is not included in this report. Summary reports of content analysis of all Comments items is ongoing currently. Selected quantitative findings from this study will be reported using descriptive statistics to summarize analyses of grouped responses. Data from all discipline-specific subgroups were aggregated and analyzed and are summarized below.

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## SELECTED AGGREGATED FINDINGS

A total of 3,490 subjects responded to the survey and 5,632 open-ended item comments were collected. The following includes a summary of the aggregated responses for all respondents for all nine sets of standards included in the survey. Responses to the survey came from all 50 states, with single responses coming from American Samoa, Guam, and Puerto Rico. States with 100 or more respondents included California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

- Of all respondents, 43% reported that their state had adapted or modified the standards,
- 39% reported that they adopted the standards, and
- 18% reported that they do not use the standards in their state.

Breakdown of 3,490 total respondents reporting by standards discipline sub-groupings included

- Music General (22%),
- Visual Arts (18%),
- Music Traditional and Ensembles (13%),
- Dance (11%),
- Music Harmonizing Instruments (9%),
- Media Arts (7%),
- Theatre (6%),
- Music Composition and Theory Strands (5%),
- Music Technology (4%), and
- those who started but did not complete the survey (5%).

Respondents represented 21 different roles or positions in the arts. Some respondents represented multiple roles or positions. The top ten groups of respondents included

- Elementary Arts Educators (35%),
- Secondary Art Educators (34%),
- Middle School/Junior High Art Educators (30%),
- Higher Education Arts Educators (12%),
- Arts Supervisors/Administrators (10%),
- Parents/Guardians (9%), and
- Artists/Teaching Artists, Museum /Community Arts Education providers, and Early Childhood Educators (8% each).

Respondents also represented suburban (41%), urban (28%), rural (18%), and town (14%) work or school settings.

When asked if they used the standards, 47% said they used or frequently used the standards, 16% said they used them occasionally, and 32% said they rarely or did not use the standards at all. When asked about their satisfaction with the standards, 54% responded that they were very satisfied or satisfied, 33% said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 14% reported that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. When asked if they felt the standards impacted student learning in their disciplines, 59% reported that they strongly or somewhat agreed, 21% suggested that they neither agreed nor disagreed, and 13% said that they somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed. Respondents were asked if the standards had impacted their teaching and 59% reported that they strongly or somewhat agreed, 28% said they neither agreed nor disagreed, and 13% said they somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The next part of the survey focused on the discrete parts of the structure of the standards model and the content included under each of those parts. When asked if the Standards Conceptual Framework was helpful, 57% of respondents reported that they strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that it was very helpful, while only 14% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixty-seven percent of respondents felt that the

Anchor Standards captured common characteristics of learning across the arts and only 8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked if the Artistic Processes reflected practices used by artists and performers in their disciplines, 63% of respondents said they strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that they did reflect those practices, and only 13% said they disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixty-three percent of respondents said they agreed or strongly agreed that the Enduring Understandings represented lifelong learning in their disciplines, while 58% of respondents reported that they strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the Essential Questions increased the depth of students' learning in their disciplines. Finally, 63% of respondents felt that the Performance Standards included a broad range of indicators of students' learning in their disciplines. Individual reports for each of the nine sets of arts standards and for each of these items will be reported and published on the NCAS website soon.

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## SELECTED FINDINGS FOR DANCE

**F**or the Dance standards, a total of 382 respondents provided input on the survey. Of this group, 43% reported that they always or frequently use the standards and 44% said they rarely or never use the standards. A total of 185 respondents (52%) reported that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the standards, while only 30 respondents (8%) said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the standards.

Fifty-nine percent of respondents suggested that the standards have impacted learning in dance and only 6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked if the standards impacted their teaching, 54% agreed or strongly agreed that they did, 39% neither agreed nor disagreed, and only 6% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Thirty-seven percent of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that the Conceptual Framework was very helpful, while 59% strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the Conceptual Framework was very helpful. Sixty-four percent of respondents suggested that the Anchor Standards captured common characteristics of learning across the arts and 34% neither agreed nor disagreed. A total of 166 respondents (69%) suggested that the Artistic Processes reflected practices used by artists and performers in this discipline and 37% neither agreed nor disagreed.

When asked if the Enduring Understandings represent lifelong learning in this discipline, 62% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed, while 35% neither agreed nor disagreed. Sixty percent of those responding strongly agreed or agreed that the Essential Questions increased the depth of students' learning in dance and 35% neither agree nor disagreed. Finally, when asked if the Performance Standards included a broad range of indicators of student learning in dance, 60% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed, while 35% neither agreed nor disagreed.

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## SELECTED FINDINGS FOR MEDIA ARTS

**F**or the arts discipline of Media Arts, a total of 251 respondents provided input for this survey. Of this group, 34% reported that they always or frequently use the standards, 18% said they occasionally use them, and 41% said they don't use them at all. Respondents (50%) in this group reported that they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the standards, 44% were neither satisfied

nor dissatisfied, and only 6% were somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the media arts standards.

Fifty-six percent of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that the standards have impacted learning in media arts, 55% said they strongly agreed or somewhat agreed, and 11% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Fifty-eight percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the standards have impacted their teaching, while 33% neither agreed nor disagreed.

When asked if the Standards Conceptual Framework was very helpful, 52% of respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that it was very helpful, while 38% neither agreed nor disagreed. Only 9% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the Anchor Standards captured common characteristics of learning across the arts. Thirty percent of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Sixty-two percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Artistic Processes reflected those used by artists and performers in media arts and 32% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Respondents (62%) strongly agreed or agreed that the Enduring Understandings represented lifelong learning in media arts and 34% neither agreed nor disagreed that they did. Sixty-one percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the Essential Questions increased the depth of student learning in media arts, while 34% neither agreed nor disagreed. Of those responding to this item, 56% strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the Performance Standards for Media Arts included a broad range of indicators of students' learning. Over a third (36%) neither agreed nor disagreed that they did.

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## SELECTED FINDINGS FOR MUSIC

**F**indings for the discipline of Music will be aggregated from the five separate sets of music standards. Those individual sets of music standards included Music-General, Music-Harmonizing Instruments, Music-Traditional and Emerging Ensembles, Music-Composition and Theory Strands, and Music-Technology. Respondents were permitted to provide input on one or more sets of these standards and respondent numbers fluctuated from 99 for Music Technology to 761 for General Music.

When asked if they used the standards, 48% of all respondents for music standards said they always used the standards or used them frequently. Those who reported occasional use of the standards included 24% of all music respondents. An additional 26% of all music respondents reported that they rarely used the standards or that they did not use them at all. When asked about their level of satisfaction with the music standards, 50% of all respondents said that they were very satisfied or satisfied with these standards, Thirty-one percent of all respondents said that they neither were satisfied nor dissatisfied with the standards and 18% of all respondents reported that they were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the music standards.

Respondents (54%) reported that they strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the music standards have impacted learning in music, while 31% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that the standards impacted learning in music, and only 17% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Respondents were asked whether they felt the music standards impacted their teaching practices. Of those responding,

55% strongly agreed or agreed that their teaching practice was impacted by the standards. Another group of respondents (27%) neither agreed nor disagreed about the impact of the standards on their teaching practice, while only 17% of respondents suggested or strongly suggested that their teaching practice was not impacted by the standards.

Respondents were asked whether the Standards Conceptual Framework was helpful. Fifty-five percent of all respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the framework was very helpful, an additional 27% of all respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that it was very helpful, and 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed that it was helpful.

When asked if the Anchor Standards captured common characteristics of learning across the arts, 62% of all respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they did, with 29% neither agreeing nor disagreeing, while only 10% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Another item in the survey asked respondents if the Artistic Processes in the music standards reflected the practices used by artists and performers in music. Fifty-nine percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that these processes are reflected in the music standards. Another group consisting of 28% of all music responders neither agreed nor disagreed that these practices were reflected in the standards, and 13% of all respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were.

Responders supported the idea that the Enduring Understandings in the music standards represented lifelong learning in music. A group representing 58% of all responders on this item highly agree or agreed that the standards represent lifelong learning in music. A group representing 29% of responders neither agreed nor disagreed and 13% of responders disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Whether the Essential Questions increase the depth of learning in music or not was the next question responders were asked to answer. A total of 53% of all subjects responding strongly agreed or agreed that they did, 29% neither agreed or disagreed, and only 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Respondents were asked to provide input about whether the Performance Standards included a broad range of indicators of students' learning in music. Of all responders on this item, 56% strongly agreed or agreed that the standards did this. Another group representing 30% of all responders on this item neither agreed nor disagreed, and only 5% of all responders strongly disagreed or disagreed that a broad range of indicators of students' learning were represented in the Performance Standards.

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## SELECTED FINDINGS FOR THEATRE

**F**or the arts discipline of Theatre, a total of 208 respondents provided input for this survey. From this group of respondents, 66% said they always or frequently used the standards, 18% reported that they occasionally used them, and 16% said they rarely or did not use them at all.

Respondents positively responded to the question of whether the theatre standards were satisfactory. A total of 60% of all respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were satisfied with the standards in theatre. Thirty-nine percent of this group were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the standards. A smaller group of 11% of respondents said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

When asked if the standards had an impact on learning in theatre, 76% of respondents said they strongly or somewhat strongly agreed that they did, 18% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Among responders for theatre, a group of 67% reported that the National Standards for Theatre have impacted their teaching, while 25% neither agreed nor disagreed that they did, and only 7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

When asked if the Standards Conceptual Framework was very helpful, 66% strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that it was helpful, 24% neither agreed or disagreed, and only 9% disagreed or strongly disagreed that it was helpful.

When asked if the Anchor Standards captured common characteristics of learning across the arts, 67% of respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that they did, 28% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and 9% somewhat or strongly disagreed that they did.

Seventy-one percent of respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the Artistic Processes reflected the practices used by artists and performers in theatre. Twenty-two percent of respondents said that they neither agreed nor disagreed and 7% somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed that the theatre standards reflected these practices.

When asked if the Enduring Understandings represented lifelong learning in theatre, 69% of respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed, 24% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 8% somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed.

When asked if the Essential Questions increased the depth of students' learning in theatre, 67% of those responding strongly agreed or somewhat agreed, while 27% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 6% somewhat or strongly disagreed.

Finally, when asked if the Performance Standards included a broad range of indicators of students' learning in theatre, 73% of respondents strongly or somewhat strongly agreed that they did. Positive responses for this item were among the strongest among all items and for all disciplines included in this study. An additional 21% of respondents for this item neither agreed nor disagreed, and only 7% somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed that they did.

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## SELECTED FINDINGS FOR VISUAL ARTS

**F**or the arts discipline of Visual Arts, a total of 641 respondents provided input for this survey. When asked if they were using the National Arts Standards, 71% of respondents said they used them all the time or that they frequently used them. This was the second highest response rate among all disciplines and for all items included in the survey. Sixteen percent of respondents reported that they occasionally used them. An additional 12% said that they rarely or did not use them at all.

Respondents were asked to report on their level of satisfaction with the National Standards for Visual Arts. Of this group, two-thirds (66%) suggested that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the standards. An additional 22% reported that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the standards, while 12% said that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the standards.

Seventy-two percent of respondents for the visual arts standards said that they strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the standards have impacted learning in the visual arts. Another part of this group (19%) said that they neither agreed nor disagreed that the standards impacted learning in visual arts, while only 9% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they impacted learning in the visual arts.

Visual arts respondents in this group strongly or somewhat strongly agreed (77%) that the standards impacted their teaching practice. Sixteen percent of this same group neither agreed nor disagreed that the standards impacted their teaching, and 7% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the standards impacted their teaching.

When asked if the Standards Conceptual Framework was very helpful, nearly three-quarters (72%) of respondents said that the Standards Conceptual Framework was very helpful, 16% neither agreed nor disagreed that it was, and 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed that it was very helpful.

One of the most strongly supported items for this entire survey asked whether the Anchor Standards captured common characteristics of learning across the arts. In this group, 82% strongly agreed or agreed that the Performance Standards do capture these characteristics, 13% neither agreed nor disagreed, while only 6% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

When asked if the Enduring Understandings represented lifelong learning in the visual arts, 78% of respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that they did. An additional group of respondents (15%) neither agreed nor disagreed that the Enduring Understandings represented lifelong learning in the visual arts and 6% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Respondents were asked if the Essential Questions increase the depth of learning in the visual arts. Of those answering this item, 74% strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that these questions do increase students' depth of learning and 17% neither agreed nor disagreed, while 9% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the Essential Questions increase students' learning in the visual arts.

Respondents were asked to share their opinions about whether the Performance Standards included a broad range of indicators of student learning in the visual arts. Of those responding, nearly three-fourths (74%) strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the standards do include a broad range of indicators of learning, while 17% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 10% somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed that they included a broad range of indicators of student learning.

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## CONCLUSION

**P**reliminary findings from this national study generally revealed positive support for the standards across all arts disciplines. The study also suggested that arts educators are using the standards widely and that they are generally satisfied with them. Data further suggested that the standards have impacted learning in each of the separate arts disciplines for which NCAS published standards. Moreover, the respondents as a group tended to support the belief that the standards have positively impacted their teaching practices. Each of the generalizations reported above tends to be prevalent across all of the arts disciplines.

Of equal importance are preliminary findings related to the various components built into the standards model. Across all discipline groups, the National Arts Standards Conceptual Framework was perceived as generally being very helpful in guiding learning and implementation of standards-based learning across all sets of standards. In addition, respondents favorably supported the Anchor Standards as capturing common characteristics of learning across the arts. Of equal importance, the Artistic Processes were celebrated as reflecting the range of practices used by artists and performers in each of the arts. Lifelong learning in the arts is a goal for all arts education programs. Respondents supported the idea that the Enduring Understandings contributed to providing learning that would help to accomplish this goal. Also of equal importance is the finding that this group of respondents generally supported the idea that the Essential Questions increased the depth of students' learning in the arts. The final component of the National Arts Standards is the Performance Standards. These standards represent the principal indicators of learning across the art forms. Once again, respondents in this study strongly supported the conclusion that the Performance Standards included a broad range of indicators of students' learning across the arts.

Additional data analysis is ongoing to identify themes, concepts, and broad ideas contained in the Comments sections included for each of the base items on the survey. Nearly 5,700 individual comments were submitted by respondents. Preliminary scans of these data suggest that respondents as a group requested that the standards be simplified and the number of standards be reduced. They also requested that the standards be less vague and that they should be written in less academic language to enhance student understanding of them. Respondents requested that specific skills and supporting discipline-specific content be embedded in the standards. Calls for the inclusion of standards targeting Artificial Intelligence (AI), special needs and high ability learners, global connectivity, mental health, and career preparation were common among ideas to be included in the next generation of standards.

Preliminary reviews of data from this study suggest that content in the National Arts Standards is widely embedded in arts education across the United States. Many of those who participated in the study did not support the idea of creating new standards. Several respondents requested that the standards, "be left alone" or that NCAS should "not mess with them!" Respondents did, however, support the ideas of refining and making minor revisions to selected portions of the standards. This suggestion varied widely among disciplines and among the various parts of the standards model in each discipline. Reports of the final findings and in-depth analysis of those findings will be provided to discipline-specific standards teams for their use in determining what, if any, revisions may be needed within each set of discipline-specific standards and within the content of the parts of the standards model.

The importance of NCAS soliciting and utilizing input provided by the field indicates a level of public participation and transparency in maintaining the highest quality of arts education possible in our schools, museums, and community arts centers across the country. Students have made significant gains in arts learning due in part to the quality of the National Arts Standards but also to the ongoing contributions of dedicated arts educators, administrators, parents or guardians, and others who value an education in the arts who understand the importance of an education in the arts in contributing to the improved quality of life the arts provide for all people.

February 2026