



Update on the Development of the Dance Entry Level Teacher's Assessment (DELTA)

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Update on the Development of the Dance Entry Level Teacher's Assessment (DELTA)

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As many of you know, the National Dance Education Association (NDEO) received a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to begin development of a Dance Entry Level Teacher's Assessment (DELTA). No national entry-level examination (e.g., praxis) currently exists for dance, which has precluded some states from establishing dance licensure. The DELTA project, funded by a grant from the NEA, is intended for use by 50 states and 15,746 local education agencies to support nationwide K–12 certification efforts. In addition, DELTA promulgates the NEA goals of innovation and the professional development of teachers who must demonstrate increased knowledge and skills necessary to engage children and youth in learning dance, consistent with national and state arts education standards by doing the following:

1. Understanding the criteria (content, skills, and knowledge) of what students are expected to know and be able to do in dance ages 5–18 set forth in the National Standards for Dance Education (1994), and the NDEO Standards for Learning and Teaching Dance in the Arts: Ages 5–18 (2005).
2. Understanding industry standards for learning and teaching dance (dance content, education theory, practice, and methodology) set forth in the Professional Teaching Standards for Dance Arts (2005, 2011).
3. Measuring increased knowledge and skills of teachers necessary to engage children and youth in learning dance, consistent with national standards.
4. Acquiring teaching skills and knowledge necessary to become K–12 state-certified in dance.

5. Identifying strong and weak areas in teaching pedagogy (dance content, education theory and methodology, and performance) so a professional can strengthen areas in need of improvement.

The DELTA will help states individually and collectively by:

1. Determining baseline competencies for dance educators in their own states and cumulatively across the nation.
2. Attesting to the abilities of individual teachers seeking K–12 dance certification.
3. Comparing individual and collective dance state education practices to those outlined in the three sets of NDEO national standards for (a) early childhood, (b) K–12 education, and (c) master teacher level.
4. Enforcing state dance certification requirements in 50 states, territories, and districts.
5. Allowing states to retain existing state certification in dance, which they might lose without an entry-level teacher's exam.
6. Supporting the "Highly Qualified Teacher" status in US legislation (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001).

DELTA Program Coordinator Dale Schmid provides the following update on this exciting initiative.

The DELTA project is an innovative collaboration between NDEO and the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education (SEADAE, comprised of the 47 arts coordinators from state departments of education around the

country). The consortium uses a proven model for electronic item development and review. Key personnel from both organizations have worked on the States Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS-Arts collaborative) Electronic Item Development and Review System and the New Jersey Career and Technical Education: Performing Arts/Dance Skills Proficiency Testing Program, on which the item development process is modeled.

Baseline competencies shall be established to ensure that dance artists and educators in K–12 classrooms across America are truly highly qualified. By so doing, states will enhance opportunities for students to experience exemplary works of art; teachers will be better educated in the artistic processes of creating, performing, and critically analyzing works of art; and students will have greater access to quality teaching. Raising the quality of teaching will also promote the knowledge and use of standards-based curriculum and assessments and influence teacher preparation programs, professional development, credentialing, and assessment.

The initial phase of the DELTA project requires a framework that identifies the exam’s content, prioritizes that content, and determines the distribution of items within and across skills clusters necessary for successful entry into K–12 dance education (e.g., health and safety, anatomy and physiology, dance history, pedagogy, dance content knowledge). The content for the examination will be drawn from the National Core Arts Standards (currently under development), the National Standards for Dance Education (1994), Standards for Learning and Teaching Dance in the Arts: Ages 5–18 (2005), and the Professional Teaching Standards for Dance Arts (2005, 2009).

Four parallel forms of the written examinations will be developed. The purpose of developing multiple forms is to allow many test items that can be used interchangeably. Each test is made up of combinations of selected response items, with and without stimulus materials, and short constructed response items requiring less than ten minutes to complete, with and without stimulus materials. All items undergo a rigorous two-tiered review process and will undergo field testing prior to the examination “going live.”

In September 2012, NDEO sent an open call to its membership inviting project participants. Sixty-eight highly motivated and extraordinarily well-qualified candidates from all over the country responded. We believe this is a testament to the importance and timeliness of the work. Ultimately, 14 people were selected to be DELTA writers. The writing team hails from 11 states and represents a broad spectrum of dance educators. The group includes men and women who are K–16 dance teachers and administrators; preprofessional program directors; studio owners; college preservice coordinators; National Registry of Dance Educators members; published authors and editors; and curriculum, standards, and assessment experts who have worked with testing and accreditation institutions across the country.

In addition, NDEO has been in dialogue with colleges and universities from around the United States that have

dance certification preservice training programs. During the summer and early fall of 2013, NDEO will field test the first of four forms of the newly created DELTA examination. In addition, we are assembling a pool of recent or soon-to-graduate dance educators and a cadre of certified dance educators who will participate in DELTA field trials. Field testing and item analysis should be completed by November 1, 2013. The DELTA Leadership team includes the following individuals:

- Program Coordinator: Dale Schmid; Visual & Performing Arts Coordinator for New Jersey State Department of Education (NJDOE); a Past President of NDEO; Executive Committee member of SEADAE; SEADAE delegate to the National Core Arts Standards/Dance writing team. Dale also managed the development and oversight of the NJDOE Career and Technical Education Performing Arts: Dance/Theatre Skills Proficiency Testing Program and was a contributing author to the NDEO Professional Teaching Standards for Dance Arts (PTSDA).
- Project Manager: Dr. Frank Phillip, Arts Consultant and (retired) Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Senior Executive; Director of the National Conference on Student Assessment; CCSSO Director of Program Development and Operations/Division of Leadership and Professional Development; and Director of Operations and Senior Associate for the State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards Projects.
- Psychometric Consultant: Dr. Vicki Frederick, (retired) Wisconsin Department of Education, Curriculum & Assessment Specialist; innovator of the SCASS/Arts assessments and Item Pool development and training materials; authored SCASS/Arts training manual; and Program Manager for NJDOE Exit Exam project.
- Psychometric Researchers (to be identified): NDEO is also engaging the services of two psychometric consultants who will assist with an item analysis of the DELTA examinations. In subsequent phases of the DELTA project (funding pending), NDEO will field test DELTA Forms 2–4 to ensure the comparability of all four forms of the tests. Subsequent item development efforts will be ongoing. Embedded field test items will likely be included in future DELTA examinations. Ultimately, the goal is to have a sufficient number of comparably performing items to randomize the examination forms, according to skills cluster topic areas.

A student’s quality education begins with a highly qualified educator. The DELTA project is a monumental step toward the goal of ensuring that the nation’s incoming dance arts workforce is equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills for successful entry into K–12 public dance education.

For information or questions regarding DELTA, contact Dale Schmid at dschmidathome@aol.com.