



NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS IN DANCE GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

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Appropriate Use of the National Core Arts Standards in Dance

The National Core Arts Standards (NCAS) in Dance provide a core resource for dance education, articulating a broad scope of learning in the dance art discipline, and outlining what students may be expected to know, understand and do given continuous dance instruction from pre-K through high school.

The standards may be used in various ways:

- 1. As a support for dance curriculum design**
- 2. As a tool for assessing students and evaluating teacher effectiveness**
- 3. As a dance education guide for parents, principals and district, state and national arts administrators**
- 4. As an advocacy resource for promoting policies that support dance education**

These implementation guidelines will help teachers, principals, and arts administrators make the most effective and appropriate use of the standards in furthering student achievement. We will refer to the standards using the language below, from broadest category to most detailed:

- Core Artistic Process (Creating, Performing, Responding, Connecting)
- Anchor Standard (A stabilizing standard that connects and is shared by all the art forms)
- Component (Describes specific operations as they relate to the Core Artistic Processes and Anchor Standard)
- Standard Indicators (State what students will demonstrate at each grade related to that Component.)

The chart below provides an “at-a-glance” outline of the dance standards.

Core Artistic Process	Anchor Standard	Component	Big Idea of Dance Standard Indicators at All Grades	Grade-Specific Dance Standard Indicators [5th Grade Examples]
CREATING	Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.	Explore	a. Sources for Movement Ideas b. Movement Generation and Development	a. Build content for choreography using several stimuli (for example, music/sound, text, objects, images, notation, observed dance, experiences, literary forms, natural phenomena, current news, social events).
	Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.	Plan	a. Dance Structure b. Meaning and Content	a. Manipulate or modify a variety of choreographic devices to expand choreographic possibilities and develop a main idea. Explain reasons for movement choices.
	Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work.	Revise	a. Refinement and Completion b. Documentation	b. Record changes in a dance sequence through writing, symbols, or a form of media technology.

PERFORMING	Anchor Standard 4: Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation.	Express	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Spatial Relationships b. Rhythm, Phrasing and Musicality c. Dynamics 	c. Contrast bound and free-flowing movements. Motivate movement from both central initiation (torso) and peripheral initiation (distal) and analyze the relationship between initiation and energy.
	Anchor Standard 5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.	Embody	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Skills and Techniques b. Safety and awareness c. Practice and Rehearsal Strategies 	a. Recall and execute a series of dance phrases using fundamental dance skills (for example, alignment, coordination, balance, core support, kinesthetic awareness, clarity of movement).
	Anchor Standard 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.	Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Effective Performance Strategies b. Elements of Production 	a. Demonstrate the ability to adapt dance to alternative performance venues by modifying spacing and movements to the performance space.
RESPONDING	Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.	Analyze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Movement Patterns b. Dance Styles, Genres, and Cultural Practices 	b. Describe, using basic dance terminology, the qualities and characteristics of style used in a dance from one's own cultural movement practice. Compare them to the qualities and characteristics of style found in a different dance genre, style, or cultural movement practice, also using basic dance terminology.
	Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.	Interpret	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Artistic Expression 	a. Interpret meaning in a dance based on its movements. Explain how the movements communicate the main idea of the dance using basic dance terminology.
	Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.	Critique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Critical Evaluation of Dance 	a. Define the characteristics of dance that make a dance artistic and meaningful. Relate them to the elements of dance in genres, styles, or cultural movement practices. Use basic dance terminology to describe characteristics that make a dance artistic and meaningful.

CONNECTING	Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize knowledge and personal experience to make art.	Synthesize	a. Personal Meaning b. Research	b. Choose a topic, concept, or content from another discipline of study and research how other art forms have expressed the topic. Create a dance study that expresses the idea. Explain how the dance study expressed the idea and discuss how this learning process is similar to, or different from, other learning situations.
	Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.	Relate	a. Dance Integration and Dance Literacy	a. Describe how the movement characteristics and qualities of a dance in a specific genre or style communicate the ideas and perspectives of the culture, historical period, or community from which the genre or style originated.

1. Standards as a support for curriculum design

Standards vs. Curriculum

Standards are not curriculum. Rather, they are a statement of our shared core values about what students should know, understand and be able to do in a discipline at each developmental age, grade or proficiency group.

The NCAS indicate the desired *outcomes* of instruction in an arts discipline as measured by student learning, and posit that students can be moved toward achieving these learning expectations through a wide diversity of instructional approaches and curricular designs. The standards provide all arts teachers with a solid scaffold, but the individual teacher is the ultimate architect of instruction. Teachers are free to decide how to incorporate the standards in their instruction, promoting creativity in teaching while ensuring that all students progress along a scope-and-sequence learning continuum.

Simultaneous vs. Sequential

The dance standards should be addressed simultaneously in units of instruction, rather than being taught sequentially or in isolation from each other.

Built upon eleven anchor standards that are shared with the other arts disciplines, the dance standards scaffold from Pre-K to commencement in a spiral that addresses the same anchor standards at each grade, but with increasing complexity. The dance standards uniquely have a Component tied to each anchor standard, identified by a keyword related specifically to dance learning (e.g., “Embody” = anchor standard 5). The Components are not meant to be addressed separately, one after another. Rather, they are meant to be addressed *simultaneously*. Folding these Components into lessons and units of study in varying combinations is most effective in supporting students’ progressive learning in dance across the school year.

Lessons may focus on one Component, but include other Components in varying degrees. For instance, a lesson’s primary objective might be to address the PERFORMING Component “Express”, Indicator c., with the goal of developing a greater range of dynamics in students’ dancing. However, if students use technical skills to clarify dynamic expression, observe each other’s performance and engage in self, peer and teacher feedback, the lesson also addresses the PERFORMING Components “Embody” and “Present” and all of the RESPONDING Components “Analyze”, “Interpret”,

and “Critique”. If students improvise during the lesson to experiment with various dynamics in movement, they are also addressing the CREATING Component “Explore”. And if the teacher folds in a closing discussion or journaling exercise in which students are asked to describe their personal experience, discoveries and realizations in the class, the CONNECTING Component “Synthesize” is being addressed. Thus even one lesson can include all four Processes and multiple Components. Organic, rich dance instruction moves fluidly among the four Processes, so that students are performing as they create, responding and connecting as they develop their dancing and choreographic skills.

Within each Component there are up to three Indicators, which state what students will demonstrate at each grade related to that Component. Since some of the dance Indicators are complex, teachers may choose to focus a lesson on part of an Indicator, and address the rest of the Indicator in another lesson. Complete units of study should always address all four Processes and multiple Components. Within the course of a year’s instruction, all eleven Components of the dance standards should have been addressed in multiple ways.

Example: 8th Grade Unit - “Technical Texturing”

Student Learning Objective <i>By the end of the unit, 8th Grade dance students will be able to:</i>	Related NCAS Dance Standard and Component
1. Adapt body shapes, focus and spatial use within a set movement combination to express different characters.	Pr4.1.8 a. Sculpt the body in space and design body shapes in relation to other dancers, objects, and environment. Use focus of eyes during complex floor and air patterns or direct and indirect pathways. (EXPRESS)
2. Make decisions about timing and music (e.g., speed,, tempo, accelerando/decelerando, staccato v. legato, etc) within a set movement combination to express characters.	Pr4.1.8 b. Analyze and select metric, kinetic, and breath phrasing and apply appropriately to dance phrases. Perform dance phrases of different lengths that use various timings within the same section. Use different tempi in different body parts at the same time. (EXPRESS)
3. Generate character intent through shifts in dynamics and attack and apply dynamic choices deliberately to project intent.	Pr4.1.8 c. Direct energy and dynamics in such a way that movement is textured. Incorporate energy and dynamics to technique exercises and dance performance. Use energy and dynamics to enhance and project movements. (EXPRESS)
4. Analyze specific uses of the elements of dance (space, musicality and dynamics) as they apply to developing characters for a ballet combination.	DA:Re.7.1.8 b. Explain how the elements of dance are used in a variety of genres, styles, or cultural movement practices to communicate intent. Use genre specific dance terminology. (ANALYZE)
5. Describe and explain how the experience of performing a ballet combination changes when applying different qualitative elements to the phrase. Cite the differing technical demands and expressive outcomes.	DA:Re8.1.8 a. Select a dance and explain how artistic expression is achieved through relationships among the elements of dance, use of body, dance technique and context. Cite evidence in the dance to support your interpretation using genre specific dance terminology. (INTERPRET)
6. Research, think-tank and list the qualitative movement properties of two opposing characters in ballet.	DA:Cn10.1.8 b. Investigate two contrasting topics using a variety of research methods. Identify and organize ideas to create representative movement phrases. Create a dance study exploring the contrasting ideas. Discuss how the research informed the choreographic process and deepens understanding of the topics. (SYNTHESIZE)

Unit Sequence Outline:

[Estimated at three to eight lessons depending on the learners and given instructional time.]

1. The dance educator demonstrates and students replicate a ballet combination that incorporates the technical skills currently being focused on in the class. This will be the base combination for the unit.
2. Next the class generates ideas about how a swan (or sylph, or other iconic ballet character) would dance the combination in terms of space, musicality and dynamics. What are some swan-like qualities for example? Students are encouraged to think-tank to gather descriptive words.
3. Students conduct research on swans and/or other characters to develop rich, descriptive details in their lists.

Example: Think Tank - How a swan might move in terms of space, musicality or dynamics?

Space	Musicality	Dynamics

4. Students next experiment with dancing the base combination with their developed list of character-based movement qualities in mind. [Evidencing problem-solving and higher order thinking.]
5. The dance educator guides a discussion about how the character-based changes in dynamics affects the technical demands and expressive outcomes of the combination. [Ex: What technical aspects changed when working with these qualities? How was this changed combination different from the base combination as it was first learned/performed at the beginning of the unit?]
6. The dance educator provides specific technique coaching to help students achieve the desired dynamics while also maintaining alignment. [Assessing through observation.]
7. Students next generate ideas about how a *contrasting* iconic ballet character (such as a cavalier, evil witch or sorcerer) would dance the same combination in terms of space, musicality and dynamics. Students are encouraged to think-tank to gather descriptive words.
8. Students conduct research on their selected characters to develop rich, descriptive details in their lists.

Example: Pick an opposing character and tell us how the character might use space musicality and dynamics:

Space	Musicality	Dynamics

9. Students work at applying this new set of expressive elements to the same ballet combination.
10. Similar to part 5 above, the dance educator guides a discussion about the technical demands required to achieve this new set of movement qualities and the expressive outcomes. This is compared to the previous set of qualities and findings.
11. The dance educator provides technical coaching as before.

12. The class splits in half to perform the combination twice: first as the first character, then as the second character, while the other half of the class observes.
13. The teacher facilitates student discussion the performance from both the observer and performer views. Of particular focus are:
 - o How the elements of dance (space, musicality, dynamics) were used to express character,
 - o How the elements differed as performed in detail,
 - o How the elements changed the technical demands of the combination
 - o What conclusions students might make as a result of this about developing characters or about ballet specifically and dance in general.
 - o Finally, students suggest the next steps to improve or expand the performance.
14. A Summative Assessment and/or Model Cornerstone Assessment is implemented.

2. Standards as a Tool for Assessment and Evaluation

Formative vs. Summative Assessment

The NCAS in Dance are aspirational: they presume continuous instruction in dance from Pre-K through commencement. If students have not had the prior years of instruction in the art form, they should be assessed according to the standards for lower grades until the missed foundational material has been taught. It is important for both teachers and their principals to understand this.

Thus students should be assessed in a nuanced way for progress toward a grade-level standard, gauged from their knowledge, understanding and skills at the beginning of the year.

Diagnostic pre-assessment, ongoing formative assessment, and summative post-assessment informed by the standards all measure and reveal student progress along a rubric continuum. Formative assessment embedded in ongoing instruction informs teachers about gaps in student learning and guides them in modifying their ongoing lesson plans or lesson implementation methods for greater effectiveness. Summative assessments administered at the conclusion of a unit of study or a year’s work are useful in grading student work and in reflecting on curriculum design.

The indicators at grade level provide a clear framework for designing pre-assessment at the beginning of the year or prior to embarking on a unit of study on an unfamiliar topic in order to a) diagnose what students may know already b) design learning objectives that are tailored to student learning needs. Focus on the indicators most relevant to the material to be taught, and create a holistic rubric using the chosen standard indicators and working down. When designing formative assessments it may be useful to drill down to a smaller grain size, using a single indicator or part of an indicator to gauge student progress in a particular skill set.

Example: Formative Assessment - “Technical Texturing” Unit

Student Name: Ronda Jame

Period: 3

Date: Sept. 15

- ★ Diagnostic Pre-Assessment
- 11 Formative Assessment
- 11 Summative Assessment

Student Learning Objectives	Beginning 1 pt	Developing 2 pt	Meets SLO 3 pt
1. Adapt body shapes, focus and spatial use within a set movement combination to express different characters.		X	
2. Make decisions about timing and music (e.g., speed,, tempo, accelerando, decelerando, staccato v. legato, etc.) within a set movement combination to express characters.	X		
3. Generate character intent through shifts in dynamics and attack and apply dynamic choices deliberately to project intent.	X		
4. Analyze specific uses of the elements of dance (space, musicality and dynamics) as they apply to developing characters for a ballet combination.	X		
5. Describe and explain how the experience of performing a ballet combination changes when applying different qualitative elements to the phrase. Cite the differing technical demands and expressive outcomes.		X	
6. Research, think-tank and list the qualitative movement properties of two opposing characters in ballet.	X		

DATE	TOTAL SCORE OUT OF 18
Diagnostic SEPTEMBER 15	10/16
Formative NOVEMBER 1	
Summative DECEMBER 15	

Model Cornerstone Assessments

The NCAS in Dance include Model Cornerstone Assessments (MCAs) for grades 2, 5, 8 and high school Proficient, Accomplished and Advanced levels. These summative assessment examples are intended as a resource for teachers to create similar assessments related to the content they are teaching. The MCAs have been designed as units of study. This portfolio- and performance-based approach embeds the summative assessment into instruction. Implemented at the end of a unit or at the end of the year, the MCAs presume that students will have acquired the skills, knowledge and understanding to be able to perform well on the various tasks with minimal teacher guidance. Each task has been designed with several standards in mind. A well-designed MCA will assess students across all four Dance Processes (Creating, Performing, Responding, Connecting), if not every Component/Anchor Standard. Peruse the sample cornerstones at the NCAS website or use the steps below to develop your own.

How to Develop a Model Cornerstone Assessment

1. Determine an authentic problem-solving situation in which students would need to repeat the processes and skills that were practiced within a given unit INDEPENDENTLY, without your assistance, over the course of a few class sessions. The students' level of independence in performing familiar tasks is the key to assessing their learning.

2. Create a new, but similar condition for the problem.

Example:

Congratulations! You have just been cast into a new production being mounted by a regional ballet company. In order to develop new audiences, the artistic director has decided to create a new ballet based on the narrative of the Wizard of Oz. Because the budget is tight, you will be dancing two roles during the production:

• *Winged Monkey*

AND

• *The Scarecrow OR Glinda the Good Witch*

3. Determine the sequence of the tasks the students will need to complete independently in order to demonstrate their learning from the unit. Each task should be tied to one of the learning objectives for the unit and its related learning standards (C, P, R or C).

4. Determine how students will document each task and have a method to record their responses. (i.e. demonstration/observation scoring sheet, video recording, writing, charting, verbal description, etc.)

Example: Student Task & Record

Before the first rehearsal with the ballet company, you work strategically and decide to research each character using the local library and web resources. You chart your findings of the EXPRESSIVE qualities used by each character. Don't forget to cite your sources! (DA:Re.7.1.8a and DA:Cn10.1.8b)

Winged Monkey

Space	Musicality	Dynamics

Scarecrow or Glinda the Good Witch

Space	Musicality	Dynamics

Standards and Teacher Evaluation

Teacher effectiveness may be evaluated fairly based on student *progress toward* the standards. For best outcomes, teachers should share the NCAS in Dance with their principals, and discuss their goals for the students regarding progress toward grade level standards, in light of what has been learned from diagnostic pre-assessments. In this way teachers and school leaders can move forward in consensus about what progress in dance learning means: what is valued, and how it is measured. Regardless of which system or rubric the district is using for teacher evaluation, the NCAS in Dance will give principals a deeper understanding of the unique methodologies and challenges inherent in dance teaching, with its wide open space, large and small group work, liveliness and noise, and alternations between physical activity, discussion and reflection.

3. The NCAS in Dance as a Guide to Dance Education

Educators in subjects other than dance, school leaders, arts administrators and parents come to dance education with a wide array of understandings and assumptions about the content and scope of the dance art discipline. A commonly held belief is that dance education consists of rote learning of dance routines. The NCAS dance standards open up a vastly richer educational landscape, articulating the breadth and depth of learning in this discipline for educating the whole child.

Written from the perspective that consistent, sequential dance instruction enhances students' self-knowledge, creativity and expressivity, critical and evaluative faculties, willingness to take risks, grit and persistence, ability to appreciate and collaborate with others, and independence as learners, these standards connect children to themselves, each other, and the world. Each standard begins with a cognitive verb, calling attention to the marriage of thinking and intuition, mind and body, that marks the dance art form.

A philosophical tenet grounding these standards is that all dance is cultural, arising within a social and historical matrix and reflecting or challenging prevailing beliefs. Thus the standards are inclusive of genres and styles of dance from around the globe and throughout history. Children, parents, educators and administrators from all cultural backgrounds can relate to the learning expectations therein. Couched in plain language applicable to all forms of dance, these standards are accessible to readers without prior dance knowledge. The eleven anchor standards -- each with an enduring understanding and essential question -- provide an outline or scaffold for delving more deeply into the grade-specific content.

- 11 *General educators or specialists in other subjects will recognize many parallels with their own teaching, and find areas of overlap that may inspire productive collaborations with the dance teacher.*
When feasible, educators should meet with their dance teacher colleague to walk through the dance standards, ask any questions they may have about them, and discuss them in relation to other academic standards and shared learning goals for students. The cycle of encountering new material, engaging in inquiry, exploring and experimenting, drafting work, practicing skills, applying feedback, revising work, and reflecting on process implied in these standards is common to all good teaching and learning environments. The dance teacher is a resource who can describe and explain how this looks when applied to dance-specific content.
- 11 *School leaders will gain new perspectives about the depth and breadth of learning entailed in standards-based dance instruction, and the opportunity it offers for increasing their students' achievement in and beyond the dance art form.* Principals should meet with their on-staff dance teacher or visiting dance teaching artist to discuss how the standards will inform their instructional planning. Together, they can identify authentic crosswalks between the dance curriculum and other curricula, cementing a shared vision of broader educational goals for students in their school.

- 11 *District, state and national arts administrators will appreciate the dance standards in relation to the NCAS in the other arts disciplines (music, visual art, theater and media arts), as well as in relation to 21st Century skills building and the Common Core College and Career Readiness goals for students.* Arts administrators at all levels can play a unique role by presenting on the NCAS in Dance to other education leaders, thereby broadening understanding of the value of dance education within the greater education field. State arts agencies revising their own set of dance learning standards can refer to the NCAS in Dance as a resource and touchstone. District arts administrators can use the NCAS in Dance along with their own state and local dance standards in designing professional development. By convening dance teachers throughout the district to share best practices in standards-based dance instruction, they can build consensus across schools about desired outcomes of effective dance teaching. Our students will be the beneficiaries of this attention to teachers' ongoing professional learning.
- 11 *Parents will see the broad scope of what their children are learning in dance class, and how it is applicable to their overall success in school.* Most parents are unfamiliar with the notion of dance taught as a school subject. Dance teachers should communicate regularly with parents about what they are teaching the students, how it is related to the national and local dance standards, and why it is important to their children's success as learners and future well-rounded adults. Parents should ask their children what they are learning in dance class, and whenever possible attend dance performances in which their children are participating.

4. The NCAS in Dance as an Advocacy Tool

Although 38 states in America offer dance teacher licensing and certification, only a tiny fraction of schools across the nation offer dance taught as a regular school-time subject. Another small fraction offer dance as part of their after-school programs. Let us examine some reasons for this disconnect.

1. *Dance education as a regular school-time subject is relatively new.* The United States has a very long history of robust music and visual arts programs in schools. Many schools boast a band or orchestra, a choral singing group, or general music courses, as well as a fully-equipped art room. Including a dance or theater program during the regular school day is a newer concept, and the history of such programs flourishing in PreK-12 educational settings is therefore much shorter.
2. *Dance education was historically housed in the physical education department.* If present at all, dance was traditionally considered "recreational" and "physical fitness exercise", rather than being understood as an arts discipline worthy of its own full scope of study. Beyond the excellent fitness benefits inherent in dance practice, the art form's aesthetic dimensions, and its ability to develop students' overall literacy, social and collaborative skills, historical awareness and cultural understanding were largely ignored. Through decades of concerted effort by dance specialists and scholars, dance education has now moved away from physical education and into its appropriate place among its sister arts disciplines. This is the case for both PreK-12 environments and in higher education programs. However, this is still a relatively recent development.
3. *There is a general lack of familiarity with the scope and content of a rich dance education program.* This lack of familiarity is common among stakeholders at all levels -- parents, education professionals, local elected officials, state and federal lawmakers. It has had an adverse effect on policy decisions that impact guidelines, recommendations, requirements and funding.

The NCAS in Dance are therefore an invaluable resource in advocating for the inclusion of dance education programs in all school districts, and eventually in all schools. The standards clearly describe a set of educational outcomes that all readers can embrace, for students who have access to rich, sequential dance instruction as part of their school's educational plan. Equity of access to an enhanced, well-rounded education including the arts is a stated goal of the 2016 federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Stakeholders advocating for policies that support such programs can use the NCAS in Dance to make the case for the deep educational value of the dance art discipline in shaping our children's future as expressive, effective and confident adults.

AUTHORS BIOS

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Joan Finkelstein, since 2014 the Executive Director of the Harkness Foundation for Dance, performed professionally in modern, ballet and Afro-Haitian companies and in *RAGS* on Broadway, choreographed for the Atlanta Ballet and Dayton Contemporary Dance Company among others, and has taught children and adults across the nation. As Director of the 92Y Harkness Dance Center (1992-2004) she oversaw classes for children, adults and professional dancers; space grants; the Dance Education Laboratory (DEL); student and professional performances; workshops; lectures; and social dances. As Director of Dance for the NYC Dept. of Education (2004-2014) she spearheaded the *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Dance* and ongoing professional development for dance teachers. She served as Dance Education Consultant for the film *PS DANCE!* A writer of the 2014 National Core Arts Standards in Dance, Joan received the 2009 NDEO Leadership Award and the 2014 NYSDEA Outstanding Leadership Award.