



2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards

Visual and Performing Arts

Introduction to the New Standards

Visual and Performing Arts

Throughout time, the arts have served as a distinctive vehicle for self-discovery and a means of understanding the world in which we live. As the state of New Jersey continues to transform public education to meet the needs of a changing world and the 21st century workforce, capitalizing on the unique ability of the arts to develop creativity, critical thinking, and innovation skills is critical to the success of our students. The arts infuse our lives with meaning on nearly all levels—generating significant creative and intellectual capital. They inspire creative and critical thinking and encourage acceptance of diversity. A well-designed sequential arts program promotes responsible decision making, enhances self-awareness, builds self-esteem and self-management skills, and helps students build relationship and collaboration skills; all of which is essential to prepare New Jersey students for post-secondary success.

The New Jersey Student Learning Standards – Visual and Performing Arts are designed to promote lifelong artistic literacy and fluency and are guided by the mission and vision statements that follow.

Mission

To empower students to develop creative and critical thinking, social-emotional competencies, and intellectual and expressive abilities that will allow them to become active, contributing members of a global society.

Vision

All students will have equitable access to a quality, arts education that leads to artistic literacy and fluency in the artistic practices of the five art disciplines as a mechanism for:

- Performing, presenting or producing, as artistically literate individuals, by expressing and realizing creative ideas and implementing essential technical skills and cognitive abilities significant to many aspects of life and work in the 21st century;
- Responding to artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and cognizance of the ability of the arts to address universal themes, including climate change;
- Creating new artistic work reflective of a variety of different ethnic, racial, and cultural perspectives;
- Connecting and evaluating how the arts convey meaning through all arts and non-arts disciplines and contexts of our global society.

The New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Visual and Performing Arts standards (NJSL-VP) describe the expectations for literacy and fluency in five artistic disciplines: dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and media arts. Each artistic discipline has independent skills, knowledge, and content. However, as a field, the arts are interdependent, connected, and

inclusive. The NJSLS-VPA are designed to guide the delivery of arts education in the classroom with new ways of thinking, learning, and creating. The vision of all students having equitable access to a quality arts education is only achieved when the five arts disciplines are offered continuously throughout the K–12 spectrum.

Spirit and Intent

The NJSLS-VPA reflect the [National Core Arts Standards](#) and emphasize the process-oriented nature of the arts and arts learning by:

- Defining artistic literacy¹ (footnote definition – incorporate fluency w/in literacy) through a set of overarching philosophical foundations and lifelong goals that clarify long-term expectations for arts learning;
- Placing artistic processes and anchor standards at the forefront of the work;
- Identifying creative artistic practices as the bridge for the application of the artistic processes and anchor standards across all learning; and by
- Specifying enduring understandings and essential questions that provide conceptual through lines and articulate value and meaning within and across the arts discipline.

The development of artistic literacy is dependent on creating an environment in which students are encouraged to independently and collaboratively imagine, investigate, construct, and reflect. Philosophically speaking, the arts serve to communicate ideas, as an opportunity for creative personal realization, to connect and reflect culture and history, and as a means to well-being and mechanism for problem solving universal, global issues including climate change.

Within the broad lifetime goal of preparing artistically literate individuals, learning experiences that engage students with a variety of artistic media, symbols, and metaphors for the purpose of creating and performing in ways that express and communicate their own ideas are essential. Additionally, to become artistically literate, students need opportunities to respond to the arts through analyzing and interpreting the artistic communications of others. (More examples that illustrate the philosophical foundations and lifelong goals that are the underpinnings of the NJSLS-VPA can be found in the Supplemental Materials section.)

¹ The knowledge and understanding required to participate authentically in the arts. An artistically literate person is able to transfer arts knowledge, skills, and capacities to other subjects, settings, and contexts.

New to This Version of the NJSL-S-VPA

The inclusion of media arts as one of the five arts disciplines is new to this version. Media arts is a unique medium of artistic expression that can amplify and integrate the four traditional art forms. The media artist utilizes a fundamental understanding of the mediums of analog and digital media to integrate digital technologies with traditional forms of artistic expression. The study of media arts can foster new modes and processes of creative thinking within in the realms of the digital and virtual worlds that are evermore present in students' lives. In fact, many students are already creating media art on their own and will benefit from support systems within their schools that mirror their life experiences. Because many young people hold a fascination with new media, incorporating media arts study into the school day can potentially enhance the connection between in-school and out-of-school learning and act as motivation for active learning.

Also new to this version of the NJSL-S-VPA is the specialized approach to music education. To account for various opportunities that students have to engage in music instruction, the NJSL-S-VPA include standards for five subdisciplines of music: *General Music (grades K–8)*, *Guitar, Keyboard, and Harmonizing Instruments [(grades 5–12)]*, *Traditional and Emerging Ensembles [(grades 5–12)]*, *Composition and Theory [(grades 9–12)]*, and *Music Technology [(grades 9–12)]*. At the middle and high school level, students are only required to demonstrate proficiency in only *one* of the preceding subdisciplines.

It is important to note that students' experiences and course offerings may vary from district to district and that musical literacy and fluency requires compound, scaffolded skills. Accordingly, the music standards are competency-based to allow for multiple points of entry. (See supporting materials for the descriptions of music proficiency levels for students). The *novice* and *intermediate* performance expectations for *Traditional and Emerging Ensembles*, and *Guitar, Keyboard and Harmonizing Instruments* are generally applicable to elementary and middle school students. The *proficient*, *accomplished*, and *advanced* level performance expectations are generally ascribed to varying degrees of achievement by students in high school. However, a spectrum of increasingly sophisticated achievement level may be attainable throughout the K-12 continuum.

Descriptors for High School Proficiency Levels

Beginning at the middle school level (grades 5–8), student learning in the arts is driven by specialization, with students choosing one of the five arts disciplines based on interest, aptitudes, and career aspirations. At the high school level (grades 9–12), all students are required to complete five credits in Visual and Performing Arts as part of the course requirements to receive a high school diploma. Because students' experiences and course offerings at the middle and high school levels may vary, the new grade 9–12 standards are described in three levels of proficiency. The three levels—proficient, accomplished, and advanced—are flexible enough to accommodate varying degrees of achievement by students during high school, including those who build on their K–8 foundation by pursuing deeper engagement in one arts discipline, as well as those who explore a wide range of artistic pursuits and experiences at the high school level.

Proficient	Accomplished	Advanced
<p>Students at the <i>proficient</i> level have developed the foundational technical and expressive skills and understandings in an art form necessary to solve assigned problems or prepare assigned repertoire for presentation; make appropriate choices with some support; and may be prepared for active engagement in their community. They understand the art form to be an important form of personal realization and well-being, and make connections between the art form, history, culture and other learning.</p>	<p>Students at the <i>accomplished</i> level are, with minimal assistance, able to identify or solve arts problems based on their interests or for a particular purpose; conduct research to inform artistic decisions; and create and refine arts performances, products, or presentations that demonstrate technical proficiency and personal communication and expression. They use the art form for personal realization and well-being and have the necessary skills for and interest in participation in arts activity beyond the school environment.</p>	<p>Students at the <i>advanced</i> level independently identify challenging arts problems based on their interests or for specific purposes and bring creativity and insight to finding artistic solutions. They are facile in using at least one art form as an effective avenue for personal communication, demonstrating a higher level of technical and expressive proficiency characteristic of honors or college level work. As arts learners, they exploit their personal strengths and apply strategies to overcome personal challenges. They are capable of taking a leadership role in arts activity within and beyond the school environment.</p>
<p>A level of achievement attainable by most students who complete a high school level course in the arts (or equivalent) beyond the foundation of quality K–8 instruction.</p>	<p>A level of achievement attainable by most students who complete a rigorous sequence of high-school level courses (or equivalent) beyond the <i>proficient</i> level.</p>	<p>A level and scope of achievement that significantly exceeds the <i>accomplished</i> Level. Achievement at this level is indisputably rigorous and substantially expands students’ knowledge, skills, and understandings beyond the expectations articulated for accomplished achievement.</p>

Descriptors for Middle School Proficiency Levels in Music

At the middle school level (grades 5–8), students may be building on their K–5 experiences or trying a new music specialization based on their interests and course offerings. As a result, the Traditional and Emerging Ensemble and Guitar, Keyboard and Harmonizing Instrument standards describe two levels of attainment: *novice* and *intermediate*.

Novice

Students at the *novice* level have started specialization in an instrument of their choice. They are beginning to develop the basic artistic understanding of the technique and expressive skills

that are necessary to advance their skill level. Novice level students should participate in performance opportunities suitable to their skill level. Their curiosity in music begins their journey toward personal realization and well-being.

Intermediate

Students at the *intermediate* level are continuing study in their chosen instrument. Their development continues in artistic understanding and technical and expressive skills enabling the student to begin to independently and collaboratively create, perform, and respond at their given skill level. Intermediate level students should participate in performance opportunities that correspond to their skill level. Through continued study of music, they continue their journey toward personal realization and well-being.

Standards in Action: Climate Change

By its very nature, art has the power to inform or draw attention to a specific topic. It is always *about* something. In fact, the increasing prevalence of activist art in the past decade evidences the power of the arts to communicate big ideas. The aim of activist art is to change the world by inspiring people to take action against societal problems (Nurmis, 2016) – including global climate change.

For example, when students engage in the creation and presentation of media artwork, or when devising a theatrical work exploring the social and economic implications of climate change (e.g., impacts on human health, agriculture, food security, water supply, transportation, energy systems, ecosystems etc.), one might expect to see students working collaboratively to research the complex impacts of global climate change on the economy and quality of daily living for people throughout the world. Ultimately, by being culturally engaging, and tapping into the creative potential of the arts to shape perception, students can contribute to imagining a new and better future for humankind (Curtis, Reid, & Ballard, 2012; Hulme, 2009; Marks, Chandler, & Baldwin, 2014; Nurmis, 2016) through their artwork. This holds true for students now, and as adults in the workplace. It's not inconceivable, that learning to leverage the capacity of the arts to raise awareness about the effects of climate change could yield employment opportunities focused on combating the negative effects of climate change and other societal global issues.

Designing a Sequential, Standards-Based Program of Study in the Arts

The NJSLS-VPA were created to ensure that all students are able to communicate with basic literacy in each of the five arts disciplines by the end of grade 5 by using the vocabulary, materials, tools, techniques, and intellectual methods of each arts discipline in a developmentally appropriate manner. Beginning in grade 6, student learning in the arts is driven by specialization, with students choosing one of the five arts disciplines based on interest, aptitudes, and career aspirations. By the end of grade 8, students are expected to communicate with competency in their self-selected arts discipline. By the end of grade 12, students are expected to communicate with proficiency in one or more arts disciplines of their choice. By graduation from high school, all students shall, in at least one area of specialization, be able to:

1. Respond to works of art with insight and depth of understanding, calling upon informed acquaintance with exemplary works of art from a variety of cultures and historical periods.
2. Develop and present basic analyses of works of art from structural, historical, cultural, and aesthetic perspectives, pointing to their impact on contemporary modes of expression.
3. Perform/present/produce in a self-selected arts discipline with consistency, artistic nuance, and technical ability, defining and solving artistic problems with insight, reason, and technical proficiency.
4. Relate various types of arts knowledge and skills within and across arts disciplines, by mixing and matching competencies and understandings in artmaking, history, culture, and analysis in any arts-related project.

Role of the Supplemental Materials Section

The Supplemental Materials section includes information for art educators, supervisors, curriculum writers, parents, higher education faculty, community members, and others who are interested in learning more about the foundations of the National Core Arts Standards for the purpose of developing curricula that support a rigorous, high-quality, sequential standards-based arts program.

NJSLS-VPA Structure

The NJSLS-VPA are comprised of *artistic processes, anchor standards, practices, and performance expectations*. The artistic processes: *creating, performing/presenting/producing, responding, and connecting* are the foundation for developing artistic literacy and fluency in the arts. These processes are the cognitive and physical actions by which arts learning and making are realized across the five arts disciplines.

Eleven *anchor standards* describe the general knowledge and skills that students are to demonstrate throughout their education in the arts. These anchor standards are parallel across arts disciplines and serve as the tangible educational expression of artistic literacy. As illustrated here, each of the anchor standards is derived from one of the four artistic processes.

Artistic Process: Creating

Anchor Standard 1	Conceptualizing and generating ideas.
Anchor Standard 2	Organizing and developing ideas.
Anchor Standard 3	Refining and completing products.

Artistic Process: Performing/Presenting/Producing

Anchor Standard 4	Selecting, analyzing and interpreting work.
Anchor Standard 5	Developing and refining techniques and models or steps needed to create products.
Anchor Standard 6	Conveying meaning through art.

Artistic Process: Responding

Anchor Standard 7	Perceiving and analyzing products.
Anchor Standard 8	Applying criteria to evaluate products.
Anchor Standard 9	Interpreting intent and meaning.

Artistic Process: Connecting

Anchor Standard 10	Synthesizing and relating knowledge and personal experiences to create products.
Anchor Standard 11	Relating artistic ideas and works within societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding.

Essential questions and *enduring understandings* in each of the five arts disciplines were used to create the performance indicators that describe what students should be able to do by the end of grade 2, grade 5, grade 8, and grade 12. As illustrated in the example below, the performance indicators translate the anchor standards into specific, measurable learning goals.

Example: Artistic Process: Creating

Anchor Standard 1 Conceptualizing and generating ideas.	Individually and collaboratively set goals, investigate, choose, and demonstrate diverse approaches to art-making that is meaningful to the makers.
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The practices reflect the steps that artists undergo in the process of creating, performing, responding and connecting to works of art (i.e., the artistic processes). To become artistically literate, it is essential that students are provided with the type of learning experiences that will enable them to engage in these practices as part of their art making processes. The practices are indicated in italics in the chart below. (Note: there are subtle differences in the practices that reflect the nuances of each of the respective arts disciplines.)

Practices

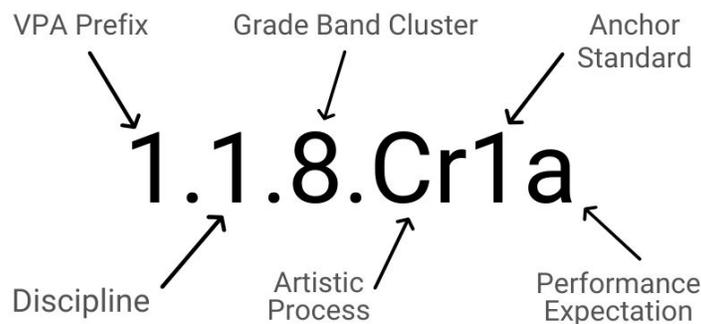
Dance	Music	Theatre	Visual Art	Media Arts
Creating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explore ● Plan ● Revise 	Creating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Imagine ● Plan, Make ● Evaluate, Refine 	Creating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Imagine, Envision ● Plan, Construct ● Evaluate, Clarify, Realize 	Creating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explore ● Investigate ● Reflect, Refine, Continue 	Creating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conceive ● Develop ● Construct
Performing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Embody, Execute ● Express ● Present 	Performing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rehearse, Evaluate, Refine ● Select, Analyze, Interpret ● Present 	Performing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish, Analyze ● Choose, Rehearse ● Share 	Performing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Select ● Analyze ● Share 	Performing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integrate ● Practice ● Present
Responding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Analyze ● Critique ● Interpret 	Responding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Select, Analyze ● Evaluate ● Interpret 	Responding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Examine, Discern ● Critique ● Interpret 	Responding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perceive ● Analyze ● Interpret 	Responding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perceive ● Evaluate ● Interpret
Connecting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Synthesize ● Relate 	Connecting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interconnect 	Connecting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incorporate ● Affect, Expand 	Connecting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Synthesize ● Relate 	Connecting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Synthesize ● Relate

Coding of Performance Expectations

Every performance expectation is labeled with a specific alphanumeric code. The code summarizes important information. As illustrated below, the first number in the code indicates the specific arts discipline:

- Standard 1.1 Dance
- Standard 1.2 Media Arts
- Standard 1.3A General Music
- Standard 1.3B Music Composition and Theory
- Standard 1.3C Music Ensembles
- Standard 1.3D Music Harmonizing Instruments
- Standard 1.3E Music Technology
- Standard 1.4 Theatre
- Standard 1.5 Visual Arts

The next number reflects the upper grade of the grade band cluster (by the end of grade 2, 5, 8, or 12), followed by the two-letter abbreviation of the artistic process (e.g., Cr for Creating). The next number reflects the anchor standard number (e.g., 1) and the lowercase letter indicates the specific performance expectation (e.g., a).



In this NJSLS-VPA version, there are three levels of performance expectations at the high school level: *proficient*, *accomplished*, and *advanced*. All students are expected to meet the performance expectations designated as proficient. For students who take elective courses beyond the five-credit high school graduation requirement in Visual and Performing Arts, the accomplished and advanced performance expectations have been created to provide guidance to educators and curriculum writers as to what they can expect students can do.

Additionally, this version of the NJSLS-VPA acknowledges that across the various school districts within New Jersey, students begin their study of instrumental music at different grades and develop fluency at different rates. As such, the performance expectations in the music disciplines are expressed as *novice*, *intermediate*, *proficient*, *accomplished*, and *advanced*.

New Jersey Statutes and Administrative Code Summary

Amistad Law

[N.J.S.A. 18A 52:16A-88](#) Every board of education shall incorporate the information regarding the contributions of African-Americans to our country in an appropriate place in the curriculum of elementary and secondary school students.

Holocaust Law

N.J.S.A. 18A:35-28 Every board of education shall include instruction on the Holocaust and genocides in an appropriate place in the curriculum of all elementary and secondary school pupils. The instruction shall further emphasize the personal responsibility that each citizen bears to fight racism and hatred whenever and wherever it happens.

LGBT and Disabilities Law

[N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.35](#) A board of education shall include instruction on the political, economic, and social contributions of persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, in an appropriate place in the curriculum of middle school and high school students as part of the district's implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

Supporting Materials

The purpose of this section is to provide additional support materials to better understand the expectations of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards – Visual and Performing Arts (NJSLs-VPA). Some of the information included in this section originated from the National Core Arts Standards documents and other parts are designed to aid in the implementation of the NJSLs-VPA.

Philosophical Foundation and Lifelong Goals

The conceptual framework that guided the creation of the National Core Arts Standards was designed to illuminate artistic literacy by expressing the overarching common values of the arts and expectations for learning in arts education across the five disciplines.

The Arts as Communication

Philosophical Foundation	Lifelong Goals
In today's multimedia society, the arts are omnipresent, and provide powerful and essential means of communication. The arts provide unique symbol systems and metaphors that convey and inform life experience (i.e., the arts are ways of knowing).	Artistically literate citizens use a variety of artistic media, symbols, and metaphors to independently create and perform work that expresses and communicates their own ideas and can respond by analyzing and interpreting the artistic communications of others.

The Arts as Creative Personal Realization

Philosophical Foundation	Lifelong Goals
Participation in the arts as creators, performers/presenters/producers, and audience members enables individuals to discover and develop their own creative capacity, thereby providing a source of lifelong satisfaction.	Artistically literate citizens find at least one arts discipline in which they develop sufficient competence to continue active involvement in creating, performing/presenting/producing, responding and connecting to as an adult.

The Arts as Culture, History, and Connectors

Philosophical Foundation	Lifelong Goals
Throughout history the arts have provided essential means for individuals and communities to express their ideas, experiences, feelings, and deepest beliefs. Each discipline shares common goals but approaches them through distinct approaches and techniques. Understanding works of art provides insights into individuals' own culture and society, as well as those of others', while also providing opportunities to access, express, and integrate meaning across a variety of content areas.	Artistically literate citizens know and understand works of art from varied historical periods and cultures, and actively seek and appreciate diverse forms and genres. They also seek to understand relationships among the arts and cultivate habits of searching for and identifying patterns and relationships between the arts and other content.

The Arts as a Means to Well-Being

Philosophical Foundation	Lifelong Goals
Participation in the arts as creators, performers/presenters/producers, and audience members (responders) enhances mental, physical, and emotional well-being.	Artistically literate citizens find joy, inspiration, peace, intellectual stimulation, meaning, and other life-enhancing qualities through participation in the arts.

The Arts as Community Engagement

Philosophical Foundation	Lifelong Goals
The arts provide means for individuals to collaborate and connect with others in an enjoyable, inclusive environment as they create, prepare, and share artwork that bring communities together.	Artistically literate citizens seek artistic experience and support the arts in their local, state, national, and global communities.

The Role of Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions

The NJSLS-VPA have been written using enduring understandings and essential questions to help both educators and students organize the information, skills, and experiences within the artistic processes. The notion of enduring understandings and essential questions come from the work of Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe and their educational framework, *Understanding by Design*®.

Enduring understandings are statements summarizing important ideas and core processes that are central to a discipline and have lasting value beyond the classroom. They synthesize what students should come to understand as a result of studying a particular content area. Essential questions are the drivers of deep inquiry. They are iterative in nature, and do not demand a single right answer. The enduring understandings and essential questions in the NJSLS-VPA are the same for all grade-band clusters. Student responses to the enduring understandings and essential questions are anticipated to be increasingly sophisticated and nuanced over the course of their school careers and beyond.

Reflecting differences in traditions and instructional practices among the arts, the specific enduring understandings and essential questions addressed by their standards also vary somewhat. For example, one enduring understanding in the music standards for the artistic process of Creating is “The creative ideas, concepts, and feelings that influence musicians’ work emerge from a variety of sources.” This understanding is suggested, in slightly different language, within other arts disciplines as well. An enduring understanding in the visual arts standards for the artistic process of Responding is “People gain insights into meanings of artworks by engaging in the process of art criticism.” An enduring understanding for theatre in the artistic process of Performing is “Theatre artists share and present stories, ideas, and envisioned worlds to explore the human experience.” This understanding is evident in every other discipline. The same sort of fundamental ideas and core processes appear in the enduring understandings of dance, and media arts as well. For dance, in the artistic process of Connecting: “As dance is experienced, all personal experiences, knowledge, and contexts are integrated and synthesized to interpret meaning.” In media arts, for Producing: “Media artists integrate various forms and contents to develop complex, unified artworks.”

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