# Handout: Changes in Art

Minnesota’s 2018 arts standards contain important changes that impact arts education in Minnesota. These standards are based on both the 2008 Minnesota arts standards and the 2014 National Core Arts Standards (NCAS). Thus, they build on strong features of the 2008 standards, and incorporate recent developments in the field. This document outlines key changes that will impact curriculum, assessment, and instruction in the arts across Minnesota.

The overarching goal of the arts standards is the development of artistic literacy for all Minnesota students. Artistic literacy is “the ability to combine foundational knowledge and skills in an art form with four processes fundamental to the arts: Creating, Performing or Presenting, Responding, and Connecting.” In order for all students to have a balanced understanding of the arts, they must master important concepts and skills in all four processes. Foundational knowledge and skills alone do not add up to a full arts education. No single artistic process represents a complete arts education. The intersection of authentic artistic processes with foundational knowledge and skill is where students demonstrate artistic literacy.

## Grade-level benchmarks provide more specificity and detail in each arts area.

A significant change in the 2018 arts standards is a shift from grade-banded to grade-level benchmarks for kindergarten through eighth grades. Since 2008, a great deal of work has been done in the field of arts education to define grade-level learning progressions. In order to bring the arts standards in line with other content areas with regard to specificity and learning progressions, and with the opportunity to build on national developments, the 2018 arts standards have clearly defined grade-level benchmarks for kindergarten through eighth grade.

Unlike the K-8 benchmarks, the 9-12 grades benchmarks remain grade banded. This is because Minnesota’s graduation requirements include one credit in the arts. One credit is the equivalent to one year of study, and that year may occur at any point during grades nine through twelve. The benchmarks at the 9-12 level describe a year’s worth of learning that should occur in that required arts credit.

## Foundational knowledge and skills are embedded in the artistic processes.

The first anchor standard is devoted to foundational knowledge and skills, including the basic elements, principles, styles and genres that are unique to each arts area. These skills and knowledge, combined with experience in the artistic processes, are central to an arts education and artistic literacy. Foundational knowledge and skills are not meant to be taught, learned, and assessed in isolation, but rather always applied while using the artistic processes.

With that in mind, foundational knowledge and skills are represented in a unique way in the 2018 arts standards. Anchor standard #1 represents foundations as a critical component of artistic literacy. However, it has no benchmarks which address the foundational knowledge and skills alone. Instead, the foundations are integrated across the benchmarks in the other strands. Text is bolded where foundational knowledge and skills are present in the benchmarks. This approach supports teaching and learning the foundational knowledge and skills embedded in artistic processes, rather than in isolation. At the same time, this approach acknowledges the foundational role of these building blocks in the arts, and leaves more specific decisions about them up to the local level during curriculum development.

## Process-based learning remains central to artistic literacy.

Process-based learning is a focus in the 2018 arts standards. This is not so much a change as a continued prioritization of this approach to learning. The artistic processes that make up artistic literacy can be defined as follows:

* Creating: Generating original art, including conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work.
* Performing (dance, music, theatre): Realizing artistic ideas and work through interpretation and presentation.
* Presenting (media arts and visual arts): Interpreting and sharing artistic work.
* Responding: Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning.
* Connecting: Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.

The framework of these four artistic processes is valuable because it links student learning to real artistic practice, rather than just theoretical knowledge. Three of these artistic processes, Create, Present/Perform, and Respond, were also part of the 2008 arts standards, and derive from a framework of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). This framework is based on the way professional artists work. It captures the ways of working and thinking skills needed by students to become artistically literate. The NAEP framework serves as an effective guide for educators when preparing assessments, instruction, and curriculum related to arts education.

In addition, a range of real-world skills and social-emotional competencies are developed when there is a focus on process in student learning in the arts in addition to the product. These skills include the ability to innovate; reflect, evaluate, adjust and refine; take productive risks; use failures and mistakes as opportunities to learn; persist; practice self-reliance; and collaborate effectively. As a result, a full strand of standards is devoted to each of the four artistic processes.

## The new Connect process expands what it means to be artistically literate.

The fourth process, Connect, is new to Minnesota’s arts standards. The Connect process was recently introduced as a process in the National Core Arts Standards. The Connect process focuses on the importance of the contexts in which artistic work is created, performed, presented, and responded to. Artistic work does not exist in a vacuum. Personal, cultural, societal, and historical contexts influence the creation and interpretation of artistic work. Artistic work, in turn, influences individuals, culture, society, and history. Understanding this two-way relationship unique to the Connect process is critical to becoming artistically literate in today’s world.