

Overview of Changes Theatre Standards

Principles of the Standards Review Process

The Colorado Model Content Standards revision process was informed by these guiding principles:

- Begin with the end in mind; define what prepared graduates need in order to be successful using 21st century skills in our global economy.
- Align K-12 standards with early childhood expectations and higher education.
- In order to be globally competitive, international and national benchmarking strongly informs the new standards.
- Change is necessary.
- Standards will be deliberately designed for clarity, rigor, and coherence.
- There will be fewer, higher, and clearer standards.
- Standards will be actionable.

Notable Changes to the Colorado Theatre Model Content Standards

The most evident changes to the Colorado standards are replacing grade-band expectations (K-4, 5-8, and 9-12) with grade-level specific expectations. These are explained here in addition to other changes that are apparent upon comparison between the current drama and theatre arts standards and the proposed changes.

1. **Content name change.** Originally the Colorado Theatre Model Content Standards presented a one-dimensional, performance-based focus that the subcommittee wished to change. Drama skills emphasize the importance of the creative process by which students learn critical thinking skills, and theatre emphasizes the performance or “product” aspect. Much as Singapore emphasizes this approach, 21st century learning requires a balanced focus that emphasized process and product, prompting the subcommittee’s recommendation to change the standards to “Drama and Theatre Arts.”
2. **Impact of standards articulation by grade level.** The original Colorado Theatre Model Content Standards were designed to provide districts with benchmarks of learning at grades 4, 8, and 12. The standards revision subcommittee was charged with providing a more specific learning trajectory of concepts and skills across grade levels, from early school readiness to postsecondary preparedness. Articulating standards by grade level in each area affords greater specificity (clearer standards) in describing the learning path across levels (higher standards), while focusing on a few key ideas at each grade level (fewer standards).
3. **The basic format for grouping standards has changed.** The new threefold structure reduces the number of standards while preserving the attention to detail for a skills- and competency-based approach to the education of the theatre student in public schools. The new format embraces the whole child in thinking, feeling, and willing. The threefold nature of this approach also supports a more modern educational philosophy in preparing the student for success in academic evaluation and accountability without sacrificing the ideals and values of conventional theatre training in academics, co-curricular production, and interdisciplinary benefits.

4. **Articulation of high school standards.** The grade-by-grade articulation of expectations was expanded. Each grade features written expectations for each standard up to the high school years. High school standards are not articulated by grade level, but by standard. This is intended to support district decisions about how best to design curriculum and courses – whether through an integrated approach, a traditional course sequence, or alternative approaches such as career and technical education. The high school standards delineate what all high school students should know and be able to do in order to be well prepared for any postsecondary option. In high school, the expectations are divided into fundamental skills and extended skills so that the student is allowed either to receive theatre instruction for his or her general enrichment or to specialize in the art in its more advanced, production-oriented form as preparation for college or a career. The individual standards are not meant to represent a course or a particular timeframe. All high school students should be able to reach these rigorous standards within four years. Students with advanced capability may accomplish these expectations in a shorter timeframe, leaving open options for additional drama and theatre studies.
5. **Integration of P-2 Council’s recommendations.** The subcommittees integrated the *Building Blocks to Colorado’s K-12 Standards* document into the P-12 standards, aligning expectations to a great degree. Important concepts and skills are defined clearly across these foundational years, detailing expectations to a much greater extent for teachers and parents.
6. **Standards are written for mastery.** The proposed revisions to standards define mastery of concepts and skills. Mastery means that a student has facility with a skill or concept in multiple contexts. This is not an indication that instruction at a grade-level expectation begins and only occurs at that grade level. Maintenance of previously mastered concepts and skills and scaffolding future learning are the domain of curriculum and instruction – not standards. Interrelationships of the standards may require some grade-level skills to appear in more than one expectation or standard.
7. **Interconnectivity of theatre arts is emphasized.** The applications of theatre education are articulated from the points of view of theatre as it relates to society, culture, and lifestyle. Theatre relates to other disciplines as a study or a career, and as a tool for understanding and using current developments in technology. The interdisciplinary nature of theatre study is emphasized within the standards.
8. **Intentional integration of 21st century skills.** Appropriate technology allows students access to concepts and skills in ways that mirror the 21st century workplace. The progression of expectations and inter-referencing of standards were clearly articulated. The emphasis on both training in the use of technology and its application to 21st century skills is articulated with each grade and standard. The cultural, interdisciplinary, and technological applications are unique to each grade level and standard and are accompanied by Inquiry Questions that teachers and administrators may reference. These are organized to aid teachers and administrators in the implementation of a theatre arts program in schools.

Below is a quick guide to other changes in the theatre standards:

Area	Summary of changes	
	Previous Standards	Revised Standards
Number of standards	6 standards	3 standards
Names of standards	<p>Standard 1 Students develop interpersonal skills and problem-solving capabilities through group interaction and artistic collaboration.</p> <p>Standard 2 Students understand and apply the creative process to fundamental skills of acting, playwriting, and directing.</p> <p>Standard 3 Students understand and apply the creative process to skills of design and technical production.</p> <p>Standard 4 Students understand and relate the role of theatre arts to culture and history.</p> <p>Standard 5 Students analyze and assess the characteristics, merits, and meanings of traditional and modern forms of dramatic expression.</p> <p>Standard 6 Students know and apply connections between theatre and other disciplines.</p>	<p>Standard 1 Create: The creation of drama and theatre is a demonstration of learned skills in forming new theatrical works, interpreting theatrical works for performance and design, and developing characters and analyzing roles.</p> <p>Standard 2 Perform: The theatre process is a product of the knowledge and essential skills gained in the study of theatre toward the expression of the human experience in story, movement, speech, and staging for an intended audience.</p> <p>Standard 3 Critically Respond: An informed literacy, ethical judgment, and cultural research are key aspects of theatre arts study. Responding focuses on the artistic and scientific knowledge of conventions, cultures, styles, genres, theories, and technologies needed to know better choices and best practices.</p>
Integration of 21st century skills	Not deliberately addresses in original document.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A design feature of the revision process. • Intentionally integrated into evidence outcomes.
P-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards articulated for grade band beginning with kindergarten. • Benchmarks articulated by grade band of K-4 with most geared to upper grades. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-K included. • Grade level expectations articulated for each elementary grade. • Clear expectations articulated for grades P-2.
Number of grade level expectations (GLE)	Average of 12 benchmarks per standard.	Average of two to four grade level expectations per standard.