

Overview of Changes Visual Arts 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 Visual Arts Model Content Standards

The most evident changes to the Colorado standards are replacing grade-band standards (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 visual arts standards and the proposed changes.

1. **Reference to expressive features and characteristics of art include elements and principles of design.** The use of elements and principles of design are a widely accepted, Western instructional practice when teaching art and its key concepts. The purpose of state standards is to widen the lens through which expressive features and characteristics of art can be taught using a wide variety of methodologies. The new standards do not reference elements and principles of design, but rather expressive features and characteristics of art in order to give districts and schools freedom to use their preferred methodology.
2. **Impact of standards articulation by grade level.** The original Colorado Model Content Standards for visual arts were designed to provide districts with benchmarks of learning at grades 4, 8, and 12. The standards revision subcommittee was charged with providing more a 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. **Articulation of high school standards.** High school standards are articulated by standard, not grade level. 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. The individual standards are not meant to represent a course or a particular timeframe. All 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 study of other advanced visual arts.

4. **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.
5. **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.
6. **Intentional integration of technology use, most notably at the high school level.** Using appropriate technology allows students access to concepts and skills in ways that mirror the 21st century workplace.
7. **Intentional opportunities for multiple ways to combine visual literacy skills with the making of art.** The subcommittees for visual arts worked within grade levels. The purpose was to create a viable document for P-12 with a special emphasis on all aspects of visual arts instruction. Intentional opportunities for integration of all four visual arts standards for each grade level were crafted.

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

Area		
Summary of changes		
Area	Previous Standards	Revised Standards
Number of standards	Five standards	Four standards
Names of standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students recognize and use the visual arts as a form of communication. • Students know and apply elements of art, principles of design, and sensory and expressive features of visual arts. • Students know and apply visual arts materials, tools, techniques, and processes. • Students relate the visual arts to various historical and cultural traditions. • Students analyze and evaluate the characteristics, merits, and meaning of works of art. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Observe and Learn to Comprehend The visual arts are a means for expression, communication and meaning making. 2. Envision and Critique to Reflect Visual arts recognize, articulate, and implement critical thinking through the synthesis, evaluation and analysis of visual information. 3. Invent and Discover to Create Generate works of art that employ unique ideas, feelings, and values using different media, technologies. 4. Relate and Connect to Transfer Recognize, articulate, and validate the value of the visual arts to lifelong learning and the human experience.
Use of expressive features and characteristics of art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to elements of art and principles of design as the prominent methodology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing multiple interpretations for addressing art elements and design principles across time and culture are referred to as expressive features and characteristics of art.
Integration of 21st century and postsecondary workforce readiness skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not deliberately addressed 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forty-one benchmarks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average of three grade level expectations per grade level (P-8), with five for high school.