

# Arts and the Common Core: A Scan of State Education Agencies and National Arts Organizations

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WestEd — a national nonpartisan, nonprofit research, development, and service agency — works with education and other communities to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults. WestEd has 17 offices nationwide, from Washington and Boston to Arizona and California, with its headquarters in San Francisco. For more information about WestEd, visit [WestEd.org](http://WestEd.org); call 415.565.3000 or, toll-free, (877) 4-WestEd; or write: WestEd / 730 Harrison Street / San Francisco, CA 94107-1242. For questions about the report, contact Sharon Herpin at (562) 799-5101 or [sherpin@wested.org](mailto:sherpin@wested.org)

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# Introduction and Overview

WestEd was contacted by the California Education Partners, California Office to Reform Education (CORE) to conduct a national scan of arts integration and the Common Core State Standards. The intent of the review was to take a narrow focus and examine state education agencies and the national arts organizations to identify and summarize the information available regarding integrating the arts with the Common Core State Standards.

The Common Core State Standards, also referred to as the Common Core or CCSS, were released for English language arts and mathematics in 2010. The purpose was to set clear and consistent expectations for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level to graduate high school prepared for college and career success. As of the 2013-14 school year, forty-six states adopted the Common Core for English language arts (ELA) and 45 states adopted the Common Core for mathematics. States will begin testing students via assessments aligned with the CCSS during the 2014-15 school year.

With the adoption of the Common Core across the vast majority of states, many arts organizations, districts, schools, and teachers are looking for options to integrate or align the arts and the Common Core State Standards. Through this national scan, WestEd reviewed the websites for the state education agencies that adopted the Common Core, as well as the websites of the national arts organizations for the major arts disciplines. The intent of this review was to research the information publicly available about arts integration or alignment with the Common Core.

# Research Methodology

WestEd used three primary methods of data collection for scanning the national landscape of arts integration with the Common Core State Standards: review of state education agency websites, review of national arts organization websites, and interviews with a sample of state education agency staff noted for their work in arts education. Each of these data collection methods is further described in the following sections.

## State Education Agency Websites

WestEd staff reviewed the state education agency (SEA) websites for all 46 states that adopted at least one set of the Common Core (i.e., ELA or mathematics). An initial scan was conducted to locate potentially relevant pages within the SEA websites. Websites were searched for all references to the arts and the Common Core using site maps and website search engines. Each site was searched using a variety of key words and key word combinations accounting for states using CCSS or Common Core and for each major art form (dance, music, theater/drama, visual arts, and media arts). For example, searches included the following key word combinations: fine arts and Common Core, fine arts and CCSS, Common Core and dance, Common Core and visual arts, Common Core and media arts, CCSS and music, CCSS and theater, CCSS and drama, as well as other combinations. The initial scan identified 17 of the 46 states (37%) having some potential documentation on their website relating to the arts and the Common Core.

After the initial scan, the 17 identified state education agency websites were more thoroughly reviewed using a content analysis approach. The pages on the website were analyzed and coded for the type of information provided and the art form(s) addressed. Codes for types of information included policies, general information, resources (i.e., how-to guides), frameworks or crosswalks linking Common Core and art standards, Common Core and arts integrated lesson plans or curricula, assessments, professional development, external links to other sites, and original, state-developed content. Through this more in-depth review, five states identified in the initial review were subsequently removed because the information provided was deemed not relevant to the research. For example, the initial scan may have revealed a document where both the Common Core and the arts were mentioned, but upon further review it was found they were cited separately from each other, such as a framework that presented state standards for all subjects (Common Core, science, social studies, arts, etc.) individually rather than linking the Common Core and art standards. That left 12 out of 46 state education agencies (26%) having at least minimal information about the integration of the arts and the Common Core on their websites.

During interviews conducted with SEA stakeholders, described in more detail below, interviewees were asked about other states they believed were working to connect the arts and the Common Core. Several of the states named were not part of the 12 identified through the website review. These additional state websites were scrutinized for any potential arts and Common Core information. Further searching using the names of the state arts coordinators specifically identified in interviews revealed information was available on one of the SEA websites, but the information did not appear in standard website searches. This state was added back into the study because it met the criteria of having at least a minimum level of arts and Common Core information available on the website, even if it was not readily available through standard searching procedures. With this additional state, the total number of SEA websites having some mention of the arts and the Common Core increased to 13 out of 46 (28.3%).

## National Arts Organization Websites

A similar process as described for the state education agency websites was used to examine the websites of the national organizations for the major arts disciplines. The arts organizations reviewed were:

- American Alliance for Theatre and Education
- Educational Theater Association
- National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture
- National Art Education Association (visual arts)
- National Association for Music Education
- National Dance Education Association

The initial scan identified five of the six arts organization websites containing some reference to the arts and the Common Core. However, closer examination revealed that several of the sites were actually referring to the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) rather than the ELA and mathematics Common Core State Standards. After the in-depth review, information about integrating or linking the arts and the Common Core was identified on only two national arts organization websites: the National Art Education Association and the National Association for Music Education.

## Interviews

In addition to reviewing websites, the WestEd team also conducted interviews with selected stakeholders from states that were identified during the website scan as having information about the arts and the Common Core on their SEA website. The intent of the interviews was to gather more in-depth insights about the arts and Common Core, and how SEAs were working to align and integrate the two. The interviews focused around two primary topic areas: (1) what the state was doing to integrate the arts and Common Core, and (2) challenges, success stories, and lessons learned while attempting to integrate the arts and Common Core. WestEd attempted to interview 7 individuals from the 13 identified states. During the initial rounds of emails and phone calls, WestEd was only able to complete interviews with two of the seven intended targets. After extending the deadline and conducting several more rounds of emails and phone calls, an additional three participants contributed their insights to the study. The remaining two people who were contacted for interviews were unresponsive to the requests.

## Study Limitations

The scope of the study was limited to examining SEA websites and national arts organization websites, as well as conducting interviews with staff from states identified as having arts and Common Core integration on their websites. State education agencies may be engaging in activities aimed at integrating the arts and the Common Core but not have this information available on their website. In those cases, the states would not have been included in this study. A more detailed and comprehensive study would be necessary to contact each SEA and conduct interviews with appropriate staff to identify if arts and Common Core integration activities were being implemented in the state but not posted on the SEA website.

It is also known that other agencies are working in states to integrate the arts and the Common Core, such as county offices of education, state and county arts councils, local arts organizations, and various education- and arts-based non-profit organizations. However, these agencies were not the focus of this study and thus not included in the analyses or research brief. For example, the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) is working with a consortium of school districts in the state to integrate arts and assessment with the Common Core. However, information about the consortium and its work was not identified during a scan of the California Department of Education's website. As such, there is work occurring in California but the state is not included in the research brief because no evidence of such was found on the SEA website. Again, more comprehensive research beyond the scope of the current study would be needed to identify all agencies or coalitions working to integrate the arts and the Common Core.

# Website Scan Findings

WestEd reviewed the state education agency websites for the 46 states that adopted at least one component of the Common Core State Standards. The process identified 13 states whose websites contained at least minimal information about the arts and CCSS:

- Arizona
- Florida
- Indiana
- New York
- Oregon
- Tennessee
- Wisconsin
- Delaware
- Idaho
- Maine
- North Carolina
- South Dakota
- Washington

The scan also included a review of the national arts organization websites. The websites for two national arts organizations included information on integrating or aligning the arts with the Common Core State Standards:

- National Arts Education Association
- National Association for Music Education

A content analysis was conducted on the state education agency and national arts organization websites to determine what type of information was provided. WestEd coded the websites for the following types of information or materials:

**Arts Integration Policies** – State-level policies, either finalized or in draft form, related to arts integration with the Common Core.

**Assessments** – Tools or tests specifically designed for measuring knowledge or skills in the arts as related to the Common Core. This included paper-pencil tests, online tests, rubrics, portfolio reviews, observation protocols, and checklists.

**Curricula or Lesson Plans** – Lesson plans or curricula, either general or specific to a particular grade level or art form, that integrated or connected the arts with the Common Core.

**Frameworks or Crosswalks** – Frameworks or crosswalks that identified areas in which standards align and can be easily integrated or taught together. For example, a crosswalk may identify the linkages between existing visual art standards and the Common Core.

**Information** – Informational documents that provided educational content about the arts and the Common Core. This included overviews, definitions of terms, descriptions of the standards, or suggestions for how the arts and the Common Core could be integrated, connected, or aligned.

**Professional Development** – Defined broadly to include professional development modules or content available on the website, as well as references to available professional development (past or future) such as conferences or workshops related to the arts and the Common Core.

**Resources** – “How-to” guides that provided readers with instructions or clear guidance on how to integrate or align the arts and the Common Core.

**Informational** documents were the most common type of item found or linked on SEA and arts organization websites. These documents and links covered a variety of topics, including: blurbs about the Common Core and efforts to integrate the arts; newsletters encouraging educators to look at their content areas, including arts, through a new lens as applied by the Common Core; and myriad links directing readers to documents or websites related to Common Core and arts integration. All seven states and both arts organizations that were noted as having **frameworks or crosswalks** posted a link to a study by the College Board which includes a full set of alignment charts broken down by art form (more information on page 7). **Resources**, only available from four states, included PowerPoint presentations showing teachers how to create standards-based lesson plans in the arts or examples from various art forms on how to integrate Common Core literacy standards within a lesson. **Professional development** materials were found in three states, two of which included links to opportunities for professional development in arts and Common Core integration, and one that included a link to a wiki page containing all the materials and resources from a previously held professional development session. Both states that were credited with having **curricula or lesson plans** on their SEA websites provided links to the *Arts and the Common Core Curriculum Mapping Project*, which includes a full slate of supplemental lesson plans broken down by

grade level (more information on page 10). No states included **assessments** or **arts integration policies** on their websites. Exhibit 1 provides a summary of the types of documents located on the state education agency and national arts organization websites.

**Exhibit 1 – Types of Information Available on SEA and Arts Organization Websites**

	Number of States	Number of Arts Organizations
Information	12	2
Framework or Crosswalk	7	2
Resources	4	0
Professional Development	3	0
Curricula or Lesson Plans	2	0
Assessments	0	0
Arts Integration Policies	0	0

The SEA and arts organization website scan also examined the origin of content on the sites. WestEd coded the websites for inclusion of original content (i.e., content created by someone at that state or arts organization) as well as external links (i.e., content created by other organizations or entities). Both states and arts organizations were more likely to provide links to other organizations, documents, resources, and websites than to provide their own original content, indicating a limited amount of original material being created and shared by the states or national arts organizations. Exhibit 2 provides a summary of the origin of materials identified for the study.

**Exhibit 2 – Origin of Content on SEA and Arts Organization Websites**

	Number of States	Number of Arts Organizations
Provided Links to Other Organizations and Websites	9	2
Provided Original Content	6	0

Note: State total exceeds 13 because 2 states provided both original content and external links.

An examination of the external links provided by the state education agency and arts organization websites revealed that some external documents or websites were linked by multiple entities. The two most commonly linked offerings were a report by the College Board and the Arts Education Partnership (AEP) website.

The College Board produced a report titled *The Arts and the Common Core: A Review of Connections Between the Common Core State Standards and the National Core Arts Standards Conceptual Framework*. The study included a two-phase system to examine

alignment between the Common Core and the foundational documents<sup>1</sup> being used by the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) to create a set of new, voluntary, grade-by-grade national core arts standards. In Phase 1, researchers identified explicit arts references present in the language of the Common Core ELA standards. In Phase 2, researchers identified elements of the Common Core (both ELA and mathematics) that referenced the same broad goals, thinking skills, and creative practices that are evident in the NCCAS foundational documents as well. The report contains both an overview of findings and full alignment charts broken down by standard.

Links to the AEP website were common among the SEA and arts organization websites, particularly the AEP's growing resource page specific to the Common Core and the arts. This page includes historical and background information on the Common Core State Standards Initiative; sections on implementation, assessments, and criticisms; as well as a section covering the NCCAS and one simply titled Common Core and the Arts. This Common Core and the Arts section includes links to five influential documents and webinars germane to Common Core and arts integration:

- *Art and the Common Core* – A PowerPoint presentation and webinar presented by Ed Week about arts integration within the Common Core.
- *Guiding Principles for the Arts: Grades K-12* – Developed by David Coleman, one of the authors of the Common Core State Standards, this document contains a discussion of how arts education intersects with Common Core.
- *Common Core: What are the Possibilities for the Arts?* – A 2011 webinar from Grantmakers in the Arts that examines the implications of the Common Core for arts education.
- *The Arts and the Common Core Curriculum Mapping Project* – A document produced by the Common Core that includes multiple units and lessons for each grade level indicating how English language arts instruction can be enhanced by connecting a genre, text, or theme to works of art, music, or film.
- *Creativity, Critical Thinking, and the New Common Core State Standards* – A symposium co-hosted by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Arts Education Department and the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) that brought together teachers, school administrators, and arts organization educators to discuss the impact of Common Core on their work individually and collectively.

Other external links found on more than one SEA website included: (1) a presentation Joyce Huser, Fine Arts Education Consultant with the Kansas State Department of Education, made to the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education (SEADAE)

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<sup>1</sup> Because the NCCAS standards are not yet complete, the College Board report used two foundational documents developed by NCCAS leadership that are guiding the creation of the Core Arts Standards: a set of Philosophical Foundations and Lifelong Goals, as well as a document outlining the four Creative Processes that are essential to arts practice across the discipline.

which drew on the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills' *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Map for the Arts* and highlighted commonalities amid the arts, Common Core, and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills; (2) an Arts in Education webinar titled *Common Core and Implications for the Arts*; and (3) a SEADAE blog post examining one state's approach to artistic literacy and the Common Core.

State education agency websites also included original content related to arts integration and the Common Core State Standards. These documents, presentation materials, videos, and related media provided information about Common Core and arts linkages, offered tools such as writing prompts, and served to instruct teachers how to create course plans or modify existing plans to align with the Common Core. Original content included:

- A state-specific PowerPoint presentation that provides an overview on integrating the arts and the Common Core.
- Course descriptions for arts courses that have been revised to align with the Common Core.
- A PowerPoint presentation linking the Common Core with pre-existing state standards and showing teachers how to create standards-based course plans.
- A state-specific PowerPoint and accompanying video covering the Common Core literacy standards and fine arts, including one example from each major art form on how a teacher could integrate the Common Core literacy standards within a lesson.
- A document outlining how teachers in dance, music, theater, and visual arts can shift their existing plans to align with the Common Core.
- An original PowerPoint on the Common Core, arts integration, and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.
- A bank of writing examples specific to the arts and aligned to the Common Core English language arts and literacy standards.
- A series of online learning modules to provide teachers with an introduction to the Common Core, including examples of connections within the arts.
- Notices of professional development opportunities for arts and Common Core integration hosted by SEAs or outside organizations.
- A link to a wiki containing the resources and materials from a previous professional development session on arts and Common Core integration.

The majority of information gleaned from the SEA website scan was general to the arts as a content area rather than discipline-specific information. Exhibit 3 outlines the number of SEA and arts organization websites that contained arts and Common Core integration information in general, as well as information specific to Common Core integration with dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts.

### Exhibit 3 – Art Disciplines Addressed on SEA and Arts Organization Websites

	Number of States	Number of Arts Organizations
General Arts, Generic to Apply to All Art Disciplines	12	2
Music	5	0
Theater	5	0
Visual Arts	4	0
Dance	3	0
Media Arts	2	0

The previously referenced *Arts and the Common Core Curriculum Mapping Project* contains lessons specific to media arts, music, theater, and visual arts. This document, which was linked on two SEA websites, accounts for all of the media arts representation in this scan, 50% of the visual arts representation, and 40% each for music and theater representation. One state included art form-specific course descriptions that were revamped to align with the Common Core. Another SEA website included documents identifying connections between English language arts and mathematics Common Core State Standards and theater, music, dance, and visual arts. Overall, most documents and links found on SEA websites and all those found on arts organization websites were applicable to the arts in general rather than discipline-specific.

# Stakeholder Interview Findings

WestEd attempted to interview selected representatives from 7 of the 13 states whose websites were identified through the scan as containing information about arts integration and the Common Core. After several rounds of emails and phone calls, as well as a deadline extension, five of the seven identified state-level stakeholders participated in the interview process.

The participating stakeholders included a director of arts education, three fine arts content specialists/coordinators, and an education consultant. All stakeholders were employees of the state education agencies in their respective states.

Findings from stakeholder interviews were around two broad categories: (1) what are the states doing around integration or linking the arts and the Common Core, and (2) what have been the successes, challenges, and lessons learned to date.

## What States Are Doing to Integrate the Arts and the Common Core

Findings from the interviews showed that some activities are common across all or several of the states, while other activities may be unique to an individual state. Two activities identified by all five states included professional development offerings related to the arts and the Common Core, and clarifying what the Common Core is and is not with regards to the arts. Several states are also developing and providing information about natural connections between the arts and the Common Core, such as using the arts to delve deeper into content.

All five stakeholders indicated their states are providing workshops, trainings, conferences, or professional development related to aspects of arts integration with the Common Core; however, not all five states referenced these offerings on their SEA website. These sessions varied in audience and topic, but were consistent in an attempt to assist districts, schools, and teachers with arts and Common Core integration. One representative reported giving several presentations throughout the state, sharing sample model lessons, learning goals, and academic maps with arts educators. Another respondent revised a previously existing arts-related summer institute, reducing the number of school team participants to focus on creating “model residencies” with a strong emphasis on integrating the Common Core. These residencies, which are working with an Essential Understanding that revolves around text from Appendix B of the Common Core, will be expanded and brought to a larger audience starting in 2014. Another state implemented full-day trainings designed to build base-level understanding of the grades 6-12 literacy standards for non-English language arts content areas, including the arts, focused on the message that the standards are “more about process than content.”

All five representatives also indicated that avoiding and eliminating misconceptions about what Common Core adoption means for arts educators is a key component of their state work. One stakeholder said “People throughout the state look to [the SEA] for guidance; we are emphasizing correct interpretation of the standards.” In particular, all five stakeholders made reference to ensuring the clear message that the Common Core State Standards are intended to *supplement* rather than *replace* discipline-specific standards. One respondent noted:

*The initial discussion was critical for building an understanding around how these literacy standards are NOT content standards for any discipline other than English language arts – a very common misconception nationwide. [The standards] allow teachers in non-English language arts content areas to approach the gathering of information, reasoning, and communication in a consistent manner with what is expected in English language arts, [allowing] for a much more coherent education system.*

The use of art as text is a major component of the message several states are sending to districts, schools, and arts educators. Using art for the “close reading” required by the Common Core is already embedded into the practice of ELA teachers and art teachers alike in multiple states. The opportunity to closely examine a piece of art, to “go deeper, then go deeper still” as one respondent explained, is a natural fit for the arts. Another interviewee commented:

*The easiest, most organic and seamless integration of the Common Core principles in arts instruction is the use of art as text. Simply put, it’s a new labeling of what high-quality arts instruction has always looked like – going deep into a piece, observing closely, examining multiple perspectives and interpretations. If you are critiquing art and doing it well, you are deep-reading text.*

The stakeholder interviews also revealed arts and Common Core integration projects that are specific to certain states. One state has developed free online modules for educators, including a series on the Common Core standards for literacy. While the module is intended for a broader audience, it includes an arts-specific section that delves into topics such as the role of arts teachers in supporting literacy, definitions of “technical subjects” (including the arts) within the Common Core materials, and the use of art as text, among others. This state also requires that pre-service elementary and early childhood educators be prepared to integrate arts into instruction; moving forward, that requirement will include integrating the arts with the Common Core.

A primary project in another state involved revising all course descriptions, including those in the arts, so that applicable and appropriate Common Core standards are embedded within the description. All of these standards must be addressed in each course, in addition to the pre-existing content area standards. Another state is in the

process of seeking exemplar rubrics created by the early adopters of the Common Core to modify and share with the arts field, inviting arts educators to provide evidence of good practice against the rubrics. The state representative added “I think I have exemplars in the field, I just want to make sure my practice aligns with and honors what colleagues are doing with regard to the Common Core to ensure examples are both high-quality and aligned.”

## Success Stories, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

The Common Core, and its integration and alignment with the arts, is still in the early phases of implementation. Regardless, WestEd asked the state-level stakeholders to identify success stories and early wins to share with the field. Likewise, the interviews also asked about challenges and lessons learned in their state’s efforts to integrate the arts and the Common Core.

### Success Stories

Respondents often reported it was too early to experience many success stories, but were able to offer some “early wins” and encouraging stories of beginning efforts to integrate the arts and the Common Core. These included professional development opportunities offered by states to clarify information about the Common Core, as well as some successes of individuals or small groups of people learning to work with the Common Core.

Several state representatives spoke about the successes achieved through workshops and trainings, as educators relinquished pre-conceived notions about the Common Core and came to understand a more accurate model of the arts integration potential with the Common Core. One participant noted:

*Success stories have included those “ah-ha” moments that come when participants are exposed to the standards and are challenged to comprehend both what they actually say, and the potential utility of them.*

Multiple stakeholders also told stories about individual teachers, district coordinators, or others working in the arts in their states who have embraced the opportunities provided by adoption of the Common Core. One district coordinator has arts educators creating curricular maps, mapping against state content standards, while building in assessment examples and Common Core connections. In the words of the interviewee, “These are deep and rich curricular maps with authentic connections to the Common Core.” Another state representative remarked about the emerging efforts of teachers to develop videos, lesson plans, and other resources to submit to the SEA for dissemination. “If these resources already exist, we can’t find them – so we’re encouraging teachers to develop and share, building local capacity and sharing across the state.”

One state representative lauded the collaborative nature of the arts and Common Core integration work in the state as a major success story, stating:

*Partnerships and collaboration between content areas, as well as between state agencies, have allowed us to develop a shared understanding. This includes strategic partnerships with K-12 teachers, institutes of higher education, and professional organizations – both focused and widespread. Also, within the department curriculum folks are working together... we organize our own meetings that nobody requires; we need to know we are interpreting this work correctly and everyone is on the same page.*

While the early wins may be smaller in size and scope, they offer some positive comments about the potential for integrating the arts and the Common Core. As additional states begin work in these areas, more and greater successes stories are expected. While limited information is currently available, collaboration and sharing across states, such as disseminating the curricular maps described above, will propel the field forward and provide additional opportunities for arts and Common Core integration.

## Challenges

State representatives identified challenges to arts integration with the Common Core, most notably misinterpretation and misapplication of the standards. Multiple stakeholders told stories of arts educators being instructed to supplant their arts curriculum and standards to instead engage in ELA-based activities. One frustrated respondent described an annual music performance being canceled because the teacher and students did not have time to prepare as usual – they were instead instructed by the school’s principal to spend their class time writing essays rather than practicing music. The stakeholder commented:

*Talk about missing the point! There is a lack of understanding that the arts do have standards, and teachers are held accountable to those standards – it’s how their performance is and should be rated. Instead they’re being told to neglect [arts] curriculum and content standards in order to supplant with what principals misunderstand as Common Core requirements.*

Another interviewee framed integration challenges by saying:

*Challenges include the misconception that the Common Core is the totality of what they should teach – that content standards are now obsolete. Also, that it is just “one more thing” to add to the list of what they already do.*

It comes as no surprise that multiple stakeholders identified time and money as significant challenges to arts integration with the Common Core. While some praised their SEAs for devoting the necessary resources to support this work, others expressed concern, with one

interviewee simply stating “The largest obstacle, as always, is a lack of time and money.” Another pondered how much more could be done, and how much more efficiently, if they were granted “dedicated time to focus and collaborate” on issues and strategies related to integrating the arts and the Common Core.

## Lessons Learned

The most common lesson learned shared by state stakeholders was the need to be deliberate in terminology when discussing arts integration with the Common Core. For example, the NCASS/College Board report referenced in the previous section outlines “connections” with Common Core, leading one state representative to caution:

*Is it actual integration or is it connection? Are you getting to that rich place of integration where you’re learning both arts and ELA or math, or are you using arts learning to hit ELA or math? Both are valuable. Both honor the spirit of the Common Core standards. Too many people are quick to dismiss these connections because it’s not the same thing as integration – this is a mistake. Just know what you’re doing and why.*

Similarly, another stakeholder emphasized the importance of ensuring arts educators are “using the Common Core lingo correctly.” Yet another expounded on ensuring arts educators understand and correctly use the concept of “close reading” from the English language arts standards:

*Art teachers know how to do close reading – asking kids questions instead of frontloading them with information. Kids have often been told how to interpret literature; we need to ensure that practice doesn’t spill over into art with the introduction of the Common Core ELA standard connections in our arts classrooms.*

One interviewee reported the lack of a consistent message regarding the Common Core due to incomplete knowledge of the Common Core documents themselves. “Too many people skip over the introductory materials and just go to the standards, but both the introduction and the appendices are critical.”

Lastly, multiple interviewees noted the tremendous scope and scale of the Common Core and warned against overwhelming educators. “The danger is in giving teachers too much, too fast, with too little support” said one respondent. Another stressed the importance of “presenting simplified chunks of information in meaningful and useable ways”.

The theme that emerged from the lessons learned focused on the language of the standards and the additional clarity needed across all levels of the education system. Principals need more training to ensure they are providing accurate information to educators, and educators in all subject areas need more information about how the Common Core will affect their own instruction.

# Summary

Overall, there is little information publicly available on the websites of state education agencies and the national arts organizations about integrating or linking the arts with the Common Core. Of the 46 states that adopted at least one set of the Common Core standards, only 13 state websites contained information about the arts and the Common Core. Additionally, only two out of six national arts organizations provided information about the Common Core on their website.

The information on the SEA websites was primarily informational, such as documents describing the Common Core and opportunities for arts integration with the Common Core. Some states provided frameworks or crosswalks that identified linkages between the arts standards and the Common Core State Standards. No states provided information about arts assessment or policies related to the arts and Common Core. Much of the information provided on the state education agency and national arts organization websites was simply links to other sites with arts and Common Core resources, such as the Arts Education Partnership website and a report by the College Board that reviewed the alignment of the Common Core and materials used in drafting the proposed National Core Arts Standards. Few states and no arts organizations provided original content on integrating the arts and the Common Core.

While limited information was found on state education agency websites, interviews with state staff revealed more activities underway related to the arts and the Common Core. For example, the website scan revealed only three states offering professional development on the arts and the Common Core, but each of the five state representatives interviewed indicated their state was offering workshops and trainings on the topic. As such, it is important to note that more efforts to integrate the arts and the Common Core are likely occurring across the country, but information about those efforts is not publicly available on SEA websites.

Interviews with stakeholders confirmed and expanded upon the information gleaned from the website reviews. Overall, the efforts to integrate or connect the arts with the Common Core have been limited. States are still in the process of clarifying misconceptions about the Common Core and identifying the role the arts can play in implementing the Common Core State Standards. Some positive connections are being made, but it is often on an individual or district level, such as the district coordinator who is working with arts educators to develop curricular maps that build in both assessment and Common Core connections.

The notion of arts integration with the Common Core is still in its early phases. Some efforts are underway at the state level and have shown some early successes, such as the

professional development offerings by states and the collection of materials from arts educators to share with others across the state. In contrast, the biggest challenges have been overcoming the misinterpretation and misapplication of the Common Core standards, and a general lack of time and funding to support integration of the arts and the Common Core.

The intent of the study was to examine the current efforts underway to integrate and connect the arts with the Common Core. The research was limited to a review of state education agency and national arts organization websites, and follow-up interviews with key staff from specific state education agencies. Other efforts by counties, districts, schools, and local arts organizations were not captured under the scope of this research. However, this report can be used as baseline data capturing the initial efforts by state education agencies and national arts organizations to integrate the arts and the Common Core. Future studies could take a more comprehensive approach to examine local efforts within states, or examine the progress made since the original data collection for this study.



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