



Illinois Arts Learning Standards Initiative - FAQ

Why is arts education important?

The arts give students the fullest experience of being human, while preparing them for college and career. Through the arts, students learn effective communication, broad-based collaboration, critical thinking, and creative problem solving. They grow in self-confidence and self-direction, create meaning, and engage other cultures through learning. The arts are essential to a complete and competitive education for all Illinois students.

What are arts learning standards?

Like other subject areas, the arts have learning standards. Arts learning standards identify what is important for students to know and be able to do in the disciplines of dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts. Standards organize learning, provide guidance on the quality of education, and reinforce best practices.

Why update our arts learning standards now?

Arts and media are continuously evolving, but Illinois' arts learning standards have remained the same for nearly two decades. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has updated the standards of other subject areas over the past five years, and now is the time to modernize our state's arts learning standards. The recommended standards place a greater emphasis on technology in the arts and reflect 21st century skills.

What is the Illinois Arts Learning Standards Initiative?

The initiative is a statewide process to update Illinois' arts learning standards to reflect best practices in arts education. Arts Alliance Illinois coordinates the initiative in partnership with ISBE. The initiative's diverse, statewide Steering and Advisory Committees consist of teachers, administrators, and teaching artists and reflect the diversity of school districts across the state.

How did the initiative develop the recommended standards?

The initiative's committees and work groups developed the recommendations through an 18-month, consensus-based process that included public forums, online surveys, and extensive community outreach. Work group and committee members met 34 times and volunteered more than 1,400 hours.

What has the public said about the recommended standards?

The Illinois Arts Learning Standards Initiative presented the recommended standards and implementation strategies to ISBE in February 2016, followed by a public comment period.



More than 900 Illinoisans submitted comments of support – equivalent to one comment of support for every hour of the 45-day comment period. In summarizing the commenters’ feedback, ISBE noted:

The proposed standards, they said, reinforce critical thinking, communication, collaborative and problem-solving skills, and “underscore the value of an arts education.” Further, the commenters praised the broad-based process for developing the standards that involved Illinois educators.

Have the standards been approved?

Based on this strong public support and the thoughtful work of the initiative’s Steering and Advisory Committees, the state superintendent called for approval of the arts learning standards recommended by the initiative. On June 16, 2016, the State Board voted unanimously to approve the standards. This vote moves the standards to the final, required step in the overall approval process: The Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR), a bipartisan legislative oversight body, will review the standards in summer 2016.

How can I get involved?

Visit IllinoisArtsLearning.org to sign-up for the Alliance’s arts education listserv and to stay informed about the standards and their implementation. For more information, you can also contact Jonathan VanderBrug, Policy & Research Director, Arts Alliance Illinois, at vanderbrug@artsalliance.org.