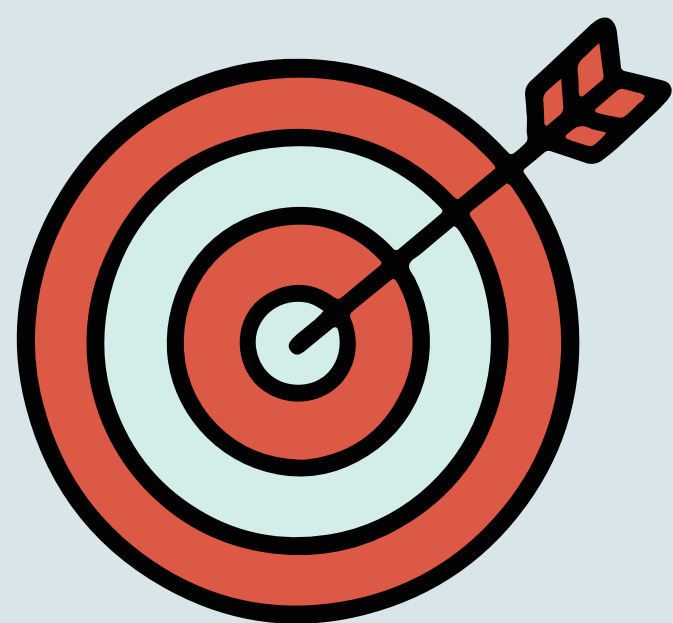


NEW JERSEY STUDENT LEARNING STANDARDS FOR VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

NJSLS-VPA 2020



Purpose

The New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Visual and Performing Arts (NJSLS-VPA 2020) establish statewide expectations for what students should know and be able to do in music and other arts disciplines at each grade level. The policy aims to develop artistic literacy, meaning students gain the ability to understand, create, perform, and interpret artistic works. By defining clear learning goals, the standards ensure that arts education, including music, is treated as an essential part of a complete academic education rather than solely an extracurricular activity.

Context:

The NJSLS-VPA 2020 standards align New Jersey's arts education framework with the National Core Arts Standards, which emphasize skill development through active engagement in artistic processes. The standards are organized around four central processes that reflect how individuals learn and experience the arts:

- Creating – generating original musical ideas through improvisation or composition
- Performing – developing technical and expressive skills to present music
- Responding – analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating musical works
- Connecting – relating music to historical, cultural, and personal contexts

The standards are designed to support sequential learning, meaning students gradually build musical knowledge and skills from kindergarten through twelfth grade. This progression helps ensure that students develop both technical ability and conceptual understanding over time.



What is the impact?



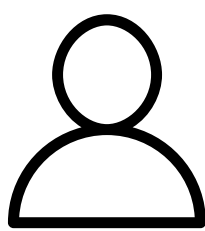
Policy Actions

The NJSLS-VPA requires school districts to design curriculum that provides students with opportunities to engage in all four artistic processes. Schools must provide instruction that allows students to:

- explore musical creativity through improvisation and composition
- perform music individually or in ensembles
- analyze musical structure, meaning, and expression
- connect music to culture, history, and society

Curriculum must be developmentally appropriate and structured so that learning progresses across grade levels. Teachers are expected to use instructional strategies that encourage collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. Schools must periodically review curriculum to ensure continued alignment with updated standards.

Who is affected?



The standards apply to all public school students in kindergarten through twelfth grade who receive instruction aligned with state academic standards. Music teachers, curriculum developers, and school administrators are responsible for implementing instruction that supports the four artistic processes. School districts must ensure that students have opportunities to develop artistic literacy through standards-based instruction.

Teacher preparation programs are also indirectly affected because educators must be trained to teach according to these expectations.

Why does this policy matter?

The NJSLS-VPA emphasizes that music education supports skills beyond performance, including creativity, communication, collaboration, and cultural understanding. These competencies are increasingly recognized as important for academic success and participation in modern society. By establishing statewide expectations, the policy promotes consistency in arts education and affirms the importance of music as part of a well-rounded education.



Limitations

While the standards define learning outcomes, they do not mandate specific courses or guarantee equal access to instruments, ensemble opportunities, or specialized music teachers. As a result, implementation may vary across districts depending on available resources and funding.

Sources

- <https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/vpa/Docs/2020%20NJSLS-VPA.pdf>
- <https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/vpa/>