



Arts in MENA American Curriculum Schools

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Executive Summary

The [National Core Arts Standards](#) (NCAS) are currently being implemented across selected states in the U.S. and in American curriculum schools abroad, including the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). How are these standards being implemented? This paper examines how this implementation in the U.S. and in the MENA region is taking place, and cites resources that policymakers, school administrators, and teachers can use to raise awareness around the standards.

The goal of the NCAS is to assist teachers in developing PreK-12 curriculum that guides the enhancement of artistic literacy among learners. Published in 2014, as a result of a three-year nationwide, collaborative effort, these standards emphasize inquiry by addressing a powerful and essential means of communication; enabling individuals to discover and develop their creative capacity; and providing insights into individuals' own and others' cultures and societies, while also providing opportunities to access, express, and integrate meaning across a variety of content areas.

In this white paper, we will explore the following questions:

- What was the context for the development of the NCAS?
- How did arts educators based in the U.S. and in the MENA region respond to an arts education survey?
- How are the NCAS being implemented in the U.S. and in the MENA region?
- What resources exist to best support schools implementing the NCAS?



Arts education in the USA

The American public has valued education in music, visual art, theatre, and dance as an important component of public education for two centuries. As a matter of fact, as recently as October 2018, a public [opinion poll](#) conducted by Americans for the Arts revealed that 91% of Americans believe arts education is an important part of a well-rounded education.

However, because state and local education agencies control education policy, the access to and quality of arts education has varied widely from local school district to district. Inequities in opportunity for exposure to the arts both in and out of school has been, and will, continue to be a national conversation.

The endeavor to provide rigorous academic standards for the arts was accomplished in 1994 when the National Standards for Arts Education was published. These academic standards described what a child with a sequential, standards-based education in the arts should know and be able to do at various grade levels (Grade 4, Grade 8, and Grade 12) in each artistic discipline.

As education pedagogy and policy trends changed, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, designed in partnership with art educators, released the [21st Century Skills Map for the Arts](#). The document aligns the study of the arts to 13 competencies known as 21st Century Skills. Highly valued by U.S. employers, some of these values include creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration.

Both of these documents were voluntary, provided as a guide or resource for states that wanted to develop their own academic standards in the arts. Both documents were used by classroom teachers across the U.S. for planning, delivery, and assessment of arts education. However, new initiatives and policies in arts education are continually evolving. Arts integration, STEAM, project-based learning, media arts and technology, and assessment methodology are only a few examples of initiatives that make it necessary to continually revisit and revise arts standards. With this in mind, a new coalition of arts education associations known as the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS), came together to create a new generation of standards. Released in 2014, the NCCAS were born out of the need to contribute to the college and career success of today's students.

The 2014 NCCAS are based on the philosophical foundations and lifelong goals that create artistically-literate students. The standards are organized under four processes that every artist, regardless of discipline, experiences: creating, performing/presenting, responding, and connecting. Each process is broken down into process components. Also important in the NCCAS are enduring understandings that summarize important ideas and carry the learning outside the classroom into other areas of life, as well as essential questions which "stimulate thought, provoke inquiry, and spark more questions." Since the release of the NCCAS in 2014, a myriad of resources has been developed to support their implementation, including Model Cornerstone Assessments, Opportunity to Learn Standards, and much more.

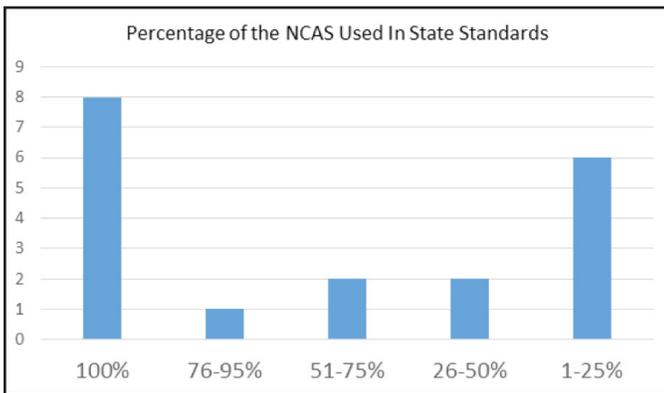




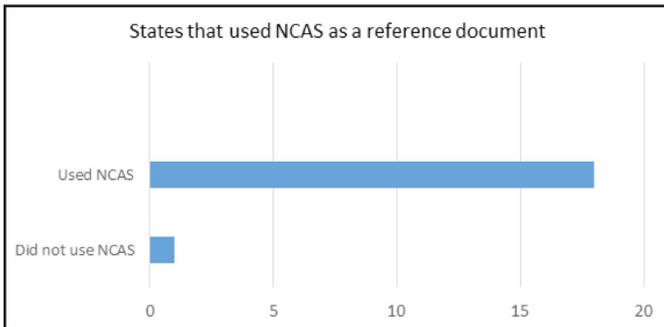
Core Arts Survey Results

In April of 2018, almost four years after the publication of the new national standards, the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards surveyed the fine arts consultants in the state education agencies of each state in the U.S. Thirty-three respondents provided the following information on the status of the NCAS:

Has your state updated your arts standards since the fall of 2013?

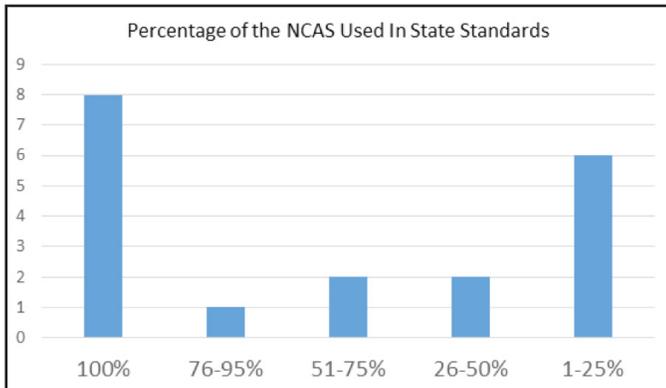


If you have updated your standards since 2013, did you begin with the National Core Arts Standards as one of your reference documents?





What percentage of the NCAS did you use?



It is clear from the survey results that the NCAS had a tremendous impact on arts education in the U.S. Of the reporting states, only one state did not use the NCAS as a foundational document for their new state standards work. Eight respondents adopted the NCAS as written with no substantive changes. Since the survey was conducted, at least two other states have joined their ranks.

“It’s not always about what I “teach” but rather what I show. I show compassion, I empathize, I show joy, and I show perspectives. My class lessons usually center around what is important to my students (I teach high school). I believe my students are passionate because they know I am passionate and they feel the energy and excitement. What I enjoy about teaching theatre is that there is a place for everyone- from helping backstage - lights, sound, props, and then actors on the stage. There is a place for everyone to be involved and feel a sense of belonging. It is always fun when students ask me a question and I question their question. I want them to know how to risk, how to try. In my class we have to learn how to laugh at ourselves when we fail.”

- Victoria Williams, Head of Arts/ High School Theatre Teacher, Universal American School, Dubai



Implementation of the Core Arts Standards in the USA

The NCCAS survey also asked to what extent the implementation of the new state standards has been successful. Respondents offered a wide variety of strategies that are being employed in their own state standards rollout. Many states are using professional learning sessions that include surveys of arts educators to determine specific training needs, face-to-face workshops, school site visits, virtual training, and webinars. States are producing resources for implementation, such as customizable workbooks, websites, curriculum maps, and instructional modules. One respondent is forming a cohort of leaders in fine arts teaching who act as mentors to develop and facilitate professional learning each year. The strategies for implementation are as diverse as the states themselves.

Delaware Case Study

Delaware, a small state on the east coast of the United States, was the eighth state to adopt the NCAS, including those for the new Media Arts discipline. The three-month adoption by the State Board of Education was credited in great part to advocacy efforts by affiliates of the National Association for Music Education and the National Art Education Association. Over 300 of the state's 450 arts educators signed petitions supporting the new standards and requesting their adoption, which was finalized in March 2016. Implementation of the new standards is in its second year with the addition of a new [standards website](#). Delaware teachers created student friendly "I CAN" statements which serve as learning progressions and clarify standards language. The Delaware Performance Appraisal System ([DPAS II](#)), the system that determines effectiveness of teachers in classrooms, has used the Model Cornerstone Assessments (MCAs) from the standards website to develop performance tasks for pre-post instruction assessment measures. MCAs are now informing the creation of model units of instruction that will be submitted to the state to provide [evidence of standards alignment](#) in classrooms. The alignment process will be completed for all five arts disciplines in June of 2020.

Arkansas Case Study

Arkansas was the first state to address a state standards revision in 2014 immediately after the NCAS were published. The standards revision committees in Arkansas elected to use much of the NCAS work, retaining the four Processes and the eleven Anchor Standards, but adapting the finer-grained standards somewhat to fit their own academic needs and protocol. Initially, in 2015, statewide professional development consisted of face-to-face workshops that introduced the NCAS and the new state standards. In 2016, a series of workshops titled Taking It to the Schools: Community Experiences in Fine Arts presented instructional modules aligned to the new standards in workshops that were hosted by community art spaces, galleries, and theatres across the state, presented by a team comprised of a classroom teacher and a teaching artist. This new model of professional development allowed both teachers and community teaching artists to experience the use of the new standards in a lesson plan, expanding exposure to the new standards to community arts education programs. Because they were hosted in authentic arts spaces, the Taking It to the Schools series was extremely popular, eventually running for three summers, with new hosts, presenters, and materials each summer. The instructional modules can be found here: <http://adecreate.pbworks.com/w/page/121235886/Academic%20Standards%20and%20Classroom%20Resources>



South Carolina Case Study

South Carolina revised the 2010 standards and the State Board of Education approved the new 2017 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards for Visual and Performing Arts Proficiency on June 13, 2017. The process took 18 months and was credited in part to advocacy efforts by state arts organizations and with a writing team of approximately 50 teachers from across the state representing PK-12 arts education, higher education, and business and industry. South Carolina used the NCAS standards as a basis for revisions to the new document. In order for the state standards to be approved as College- and Career-Ready, the draft of the new standards had to be presented and endorsed by business, industry, and two- and four-year higher education institutions across the state. South Carolina has had standards in Media Arts since 2010 and now is the first state in the country to have stand-alone standards in Design. These new Design Standards can be used by any arts or academic content area and address learner goals for designing and solving challenges.

South Carolina's standards are proficiency based and serve as a progression of learning for students with no prior knowledge in the art form regardless of age to college- and career-ready and written in "I CAN" statements for the learner. Implementation of the new standards is in its second year. Over 300 educators in visual and performing arts are participating in ongoing hybrid professional learning series that have been designed and implemented across the state to include professional learning in design thinking and design thinking teacher institutes. South Carolina has standards for eight different content areas: Dance, Theatre, Visual Arts, General Music, Instrumental Music, Choral Music, Media Arts, and Design.

California Case study:

California had not revised State Visual and Performing Arts Standards since the first State Board adopted standards of January 2001. In 2016, Assembly Bill 2862 (O'Donnell) called for the long overdue revision to California's Visual and Performing Arts Standards. The bill language included a direct reference to NCAS and included the following language, "The bill requires that the National Core Arts Standards developed by the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards serve as the basis for deliberations regarding revisions to the visual and performing arts content standards." Armed with this foundational document, the California Subject Matter Advisory Committee (SAC), convened by the State Instructional Quality Commission, began deliberation on new State Standards for Visual and Performing Arts. Additionally, with the passage of Assembly Bill 37 (O'Donnell), Media Arts was added to the content disciplines covered by the new VAPA Standards to strengthen the alignment to NCAS.

When the SAC meetings began in February 2018, twenty arts educators, four in each arts discipline sat down with copies of the NCAS documents and began the year-long process of revising them to meet the needs of California arts educators. The new California arts standards will retain the NCAS formatting and process of inquiry components along with the NCAS artistic processes and process components. Each discipline will include a California-specific introduction and a revised document glossary to support the California revisions.

In January of 2019 the State Board of Education will adopt new PreK-12 standards for Visual and Performing Arts, including Media Arts, for California educators. And while California did not directly adopt NCAS as some states have done, these new California Arts Standards will owe a huge debt to the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards and reflect the shift from product-based standards to process-based learning that form the foundation of the NCAS.





Arts education in the MENA region

“To help students find their passion of art, I first let them know that they are ALL artists - even if they don’t know it yet. I tell them that we all have the natural desire to create in some form or another, whether it be baking and decorating a cake or capturing a cool photograph. It’s essential for students to know that art doesn’t have to be beautiful, it can be strange or even “ugly.” Although, art does need to have their effort and thoughtfulness behind it. Part of their journey in my classroom is to learn how to communicate their purpose with colors, lines and shapes (along with the other important elements and principles of art). It’s fun to show them how art is everywhere and part of our daily lives. They are all artists because they create. I just help them recognize their abilities.”

-Amy AIDashti, Middle School Art Teacher, American Academy for Girls, Kuwait

One thing about the region is that the arts are all around. From the annual Art Dubai and Alserkal Avenue, the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, the group of slender three towers in Kuwait, the Louvre Abu Dhabi, Royal Opera House Muscat, the Citadel in Amman, the music of Lebanon’s Fayrouz, paintings and sculptures from ancient Egypt, and the National Museum in Bahrain. Many of the countries in the MENA region are focused on transitioning to knowledge-based and innovation-based economies. Creativity, inclusion, and global interaction are essential components to these economies and in the arts as well. How visible are the arts in curriculum? In Elizabeth Derderian’s *Arts Education: Resources and Options for the UAE and Ras Al Khaimah*, she cites that “The arts are often seen as additional, rather than integral, parts of an academic curriculum” (p. 21).

In the 2016 *Teach Middle East Magazine* article “Why teaching the arts is integral to helping students develop 21st century skills”, Arts Consultant Cory Wilkerson said that “At its core, arts education involves creating, innovating, generating, making products, presenting, responding, critically thinking about product and processes; as well as connecting with the world.” Arts education in the region continues to shift towards being an essential component of the curriculum. This varies by school. As changes occur in arts standards in the United States, American curriculum schools in the MENA region respond. Here are some examples of curriculum changes and professional learning in the arts at these types of schools in the region.

- In the 2014 document focused on synchronized inspection and accreditation for Dubai American curriculum schools it was cited that, “Elective courses, including arts, must be available to high school students.” The arts were expected to be an elective, as well as mandatory, as part of the graduation requirements.
- During 2015 at the MENA Common Core Conference two sessions were led by Cory Wilkerson focused on the National Core Arts Standards. This included: *A Framework for Learning: Exploring the newly released Core Arts Standards* and *Connecting Points: Structuring Teaching and Learning in Art and Arts Integration using the Core Arts Standards*.

- NESAs or Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools has been in existence for 50 years with a focus on serving member schools by facilitating sustainable and systemic school improvement based on the best practices of American and international education. Samples of previous and recent professional learning they have offered at conferences and institutes include: drama and performance, Measuring Creativity: The Role of Assessment in the Arts, Standards-Based Assessment Literacy for Specialist Subjects — Art, Drama/Dance, Physical Education, World Languages, Music, Media Arts, and National Arts Standards in Action (Curriculum Design with the National Arts Education Standards). Teachers are encouraged to use the hashtag #NESArts to get connected and share projects and students work with arts educators.
- Some schools cited the use of the AERO+ standards for the arts. AERO+ was the second phase of the AERO standards and includes: music, visual arts, and world languages. These standards and benchmarks were created to serve teachers and students in American and international schools around the world.

Schools and arts educators in the MENA region continue to be on a journey of learning and implementing the National Core Arts Standards, as demonstrated in a 2017 survey. The standards were new to many during this time. Many schools were aware of the standards and had read the standards for their respective grade levels. An area of growth cited by many was the need for an implementation plan as one teacher noted below:

“I would like more information for implementation ideas. My colleagues and I understand the standards, but the implementation is what we are truly trying to work on.”

– Core Arts Survey teacher response





MENA Core Arts Standards Survey results

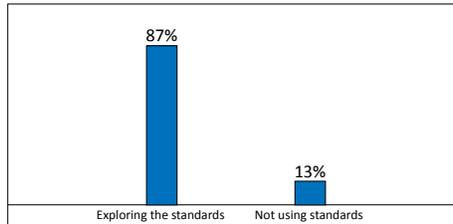
“Quality arts education has been proven to have the power to improve learning across all content areas, putting 21st century skills into practice as well as helping students with social-emotional learning.”

– Sarah Sharak, Arts Teacher, Dubai

In 2017, forty arts educators and administrators in the MENA region were provided a short survey to gauge impressions of the National Core Arts Standards. The following data gives some insight from educators and schools.

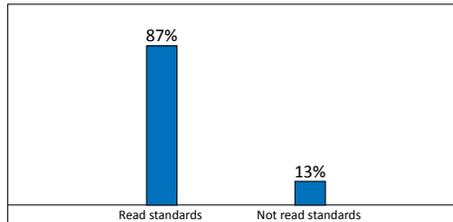
Is your school using the National Core Arts Standards?

87% of survey respondents said that their school is exploring the standards. 13% said there were not using the standards.



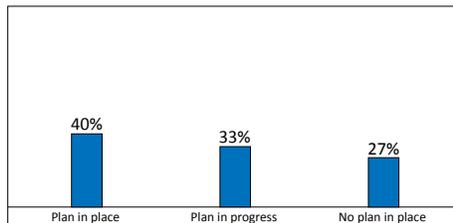
Have you read the National Core Arts Standards for your grade level?

Again 87% stated that they had read the standards for their respective grade level. 13% of respondents had not read the standards.



Does your school have an implementation plan for the National Core Arts Standards?

While 40% responded that an implementation plan was in place, 33% cited a plan was in progress, and 27% said no plan was in place.



What would you like to learn more about the National Core Arts Standards?

Answers to this question varied from wanting to learn more about sample unit plans, assessments, how best to support teachers, how other schools are using the standards, and implementation.



KDSL Global Supports the National Core Arts Standards in the MENA region

KDSL Global conducts extensive professional learning for educators worldwide. The following activities targeted the greater MENA region educators at American curriculum schools.

- National Core Arts Webinars – KDSL Global has hosted several webinars for American curriculum educators in the MENA region. These one-hour learning opportunities allow participants to explore a topic and interact with experts. Multiple arts webinars were held for educators on topics such as what are the standards, implementation, and instruction and assessment of the standards.
- National Core Arts Consultants – KDSL Global offers school-based support for further understanding of the standards. Cory Wilkerson is a freelance education consultant in standards-based arts instruction and assessment and has served on several statewide initiatives in arts standards and assessment in the state of Pennsylvania, during which she co-authored the Pennsylvania State Education Framework, co-chaired the Pennsylvania Standards Aligned Systems Committee for the Arts, and served as faculty for the Governor’s Institute for Arts educators. On assignment with the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, she assisted with the work of the writing of the new arts standards.

Marcia McCaffrey leads the state’s public education sector in defining and meeting quality arts education in New Hampshire. She is also president-elect of the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education (SEADAE) and represents SEADAE on the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) Leadership Team, which is revising the national voluntary arts standards. Ms. McCaffrey’s past experience includes serving as a National Endowment for the Arts grant panelist for Learning in the Arts; serving as Steering Committee Member for the State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards/Arts Consortium (a project out of the Council of Chief State School Officers); presenting at national conferences on topics including the power of arts assessment to change teaching, learning, and arts education in the 21st Century; drawing and editing the New Hampshire K-12 Curriculum Framework for the Arts; and producing the report Measuring Up: New Hampshire Arts Education Data Project.

- MENA Common Core Conference: This conference provided professional development to American curriculum schools in the region, focusing on effectively employing Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in the classroom. In addition, arts was added during the last year of this conference in 2015. Schools and facilitators were introduced to the new standards, and they started to plan their implementation and unpacked the standards and concepts together.

“Art allows students freedom to think and express their feelings. To have ability and think imaginatively is natural for children and art allows them to do that, so they gain confidence when they can show their imagination and dreams. Moreover they are learning about different cultures and new styles and techniques. Sometimes they have to work together and that teaches them contributing, responsibility and compromising, skills that are important.”

- Zuzana Moravcikova, Arts Teacher, American Academy for Girls in Kuwait

Conclusion

“Arts are essential in the education and creating a well-rounded student. It connects the logical/factual side of the brain to the creative/innovative side. In arts classes, students get to connect content from core subjects with self-expression. Therefore, students gain a deeper understanding of their world and themselves.”

- Arts Teacher, American United School of Kuwait

The arts are a critical part of education and should be advocated as a core component of curriculum. Many of the 21st century skills which schools emphasize are addressed in the arts. Students are free to explore, express themselves, take risks, and experiment. The arts continue to be a great connector of people all around the world and should always have a seat at the education table. The goal of this paper was to learn more about the status of the arts standards and discover where implementation was in the USA and in the MENA region. It is the hopes of the authors that the arts and the progress schools make towards implementing the standards continue to be discussed and shared widely.

The KDSL Global team is available to liaise with parents, schools, governments, and educational organizations to provide more specialized consultations on the National Core Arts Standards in schools.





Arts Resources

AERO+ Standards

<http://www.projectaero.org/AEROplus/index.htm>

Americans for the Arts. 'Americans Speak Out About The Arts in 2018: An In-Depth Look at Perceptions and Attitudes About the Arts in America'. 2018.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/101584>

Crayola standards-based lesson plans by grade and subject

<https://www.crayola.com/lesson-plans/>

Educational Theatre Association

<https://www.schooltheatre.org/home>

National Art Education Association

<https://www.arteducators.org/>

National Association for Music Education

<https://nafme.org>

National Association for Music Education. Teaching with Primary Sources Curriculum Units for the 2014 Music Standards.

<https://nafme.org/my-classroom/nafme-tps-curriculum-units-2014-music-responding-standards/>

National Coalition for Core Arts Standards

<https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/>

National Coalition for Core Arts Standards. Explaining the Standards: Need to Know Now.

<https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/content/resources>

National Coalition for Core Arts Standards. Opportunity to Learn Standards.

<https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/content/resources>

National Coalition for Core Art Standards Resources

<https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/content/resources>

National Coalition for Core Arts Standards. What are the National Core Art Standards?

<https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/content/national-core-arts-standards>

National Dance Education Association

<https://www.ndeo.org/content.aspx?sl=1013023467>

PCG Courses (license needs to be purchased)

https://www.pepperpd.com/courses-list?subject_id=ARTS&grade_id=all&author_id=SEADAE

Partnership for 21st Century Skills. '21st Century Skills Map for the Arts.' 2010

http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/P21_arts_map_final.pdf



About KDSL Global

KDSL Global is a USA and UAE-based leading learning organization focused on empowering educators and education businesses globally.

Author

Kevin Simpson, Founder, KDSL Global

KDSL Global is an education consulting company launched by Kevin Simpson in 2016 in the USA and in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Simpson has served 500+ schools and thousands of educators worldwide in 20 countries. The majority of his work in education has centered on American curriculum schools. Since 2008, he has been focused on education in the MENA region, assisted numerous schools with accreditation, training, and development, and served as a thought partner on school start-up projects. Simpson is co-founder of the UAE Learning Network (one of the largest online network of educators in the UAE) and has participated in numerous education panels and radio shows discussing American curriculum. In addition, he has authored numerous papers on American curriculum schools in the MENA region. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education and a Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Teaching from Michigan State University (USA). Currently, he is a member of the Association for the Advancement of International Education (AAIE) and studying at their Institute for International School Leadership.

Author

Joyce Huser

As Fine Arts Education Consultant for the Kansas State Department of Education, Joyce provides state and national educational guidance and resources for diverse arts, arts education, and general education groups regarding leadership in developing curricular standards, curriculum design, instruction, and program planning. She is a two-time National Board Certified teacher in Early/Middle Childhood Art, and has been an adjunct instructor for both the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas and Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas. She was a high school, middle, and elementary art teacher for 20 years in various school districts in Wisconsin and Kansas, and director of the Valley Park Elementary Cultural Arts Program in Overland Park, Kansas for six years. She has been a member of and served various roles in professional associations such as SEADAE, NAEA, NASDAE, NAFME, KCA, KMEA, KAEA, KSAEA, and Kansas Thespians. Her work has included writing National Course Code Descriptors for the visual arts with direction from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); assisting in the development of the 21st Century Arts Skills Map in cooperation with The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21); and writing the National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts through the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS). She has written various articles for state and national publications, including chapters for publications in and outside of Kansas. She has conducted various presentations and workshops across the United States and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. During her professional career, Joyce has been awarded various state and regional awards including the Kansas and National Outstanding Elementary Art Educator of the Year Award and the Kansas and National Outstanding Supervision and Administrator of the Year awards.



Author

Lana Hallmark

Lana Hallmark holds a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre from Hendrix College and a Master of Education in Communication from Harding University. She has been an arts educator in both formal and informal settings since 1979, when she began her career as a high school theater instructor, director, and forensics coach at Searcy High School. Throughout that time, she was active in local community arts groups and a familiar face on the local community theatre stage. In 1999, Ms. Hallmark left her teaching position to open a theatre, leading it to be a respected part of the local business and arts community. The theatre is home to KidStage, a popular children's theatre which allowed Ms. Hallmark to continue to impact the lives of children through the arts. The theatre, Center on the Square, is currently enjoying its twentieth season, even though Ms. Hallmark resigned as executive and artistic director in 2011 to return to education. Since 2011, Ms. Hallmark has served as the Fine Arts Program Manager for the Arkansas Department of Education, coordinating the arts education across all arts disciplines of 465,000 public school students in Grades K-12 across the state. Working at both the state and national level to provide students with rich arts experiences has proven to be the culmination of a long, rewarding career in arts education. Ms. Hallmark lives in Little Rock where she continues to be an active community theatre performer and director. She enjoys spending time with her daughter, a writer, and her son, a visual artist.

Editor

Shanika P. Carter

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Thank you to all of the arts educators in the MENA region who contributed quotes and student work.

For more information about KDSL Global on how its services can help you learn about education in the MENA region, please contact Kevin Simpson at kevin@kdslobal.com.
www.kdslobal.com