

Jim Van Zandt's Written Feedback on the Fine Arts TEKS Pursuant to Committee Drafts and Reports to SBOE in July

NOTE: This report is in the format of the questionnaire sent by TEA. There might be some redundancy, in that some of my responses intentionally appear under more than one question.

The committees did an outstanding job of creating first drafts, and the questions and feedback from the State Board of Education in July were very helpful, appropriate, and relevant. I look forward to the public input and continuing dialogue.

1. Is a complete and logical development of fine arts concepts followed for each grade level or course? What recommendations do you have for improvement?

ART, Grades K-5 and K-8:

- I believe the draft is generally excellent in terms of sequence, content, rigor, and relevance.

Art, Grades 9-12:

- I believe the draft is generally excellent in terms of sequence, content, rigor, and relevance.
- The committee's draft clearly and appropriately has stated the need for the art TEKS to be taught specifically within the Fine Arts area, by highly qualified professionals certified in Art.
- The revisions to the Art I TEKS seem to negate the fine arts credit substitutions of Principals and Elements of Floral Design, Digital Art and Animation, and 3-D Modeling and Animation. With these revised Art TEKS, these Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Technology Applications courses should no longer substitute for state fine arts credit.
- I agree that we should indeed add the recommended courses in Digital Art & Media at all levels. That is a growth area that is very relevant to today's students.
- I support the addition of Art and Media Communications, Levels I-II.
- The additional courses and adjustments to language are designed to reflect college readiness and develop 21st century skills.
- The emphasis on "originality" and "collaboration" in the draft is a very positive step.
- I recommend that we NOT add the proposed "new" Art II, III, and IV courses. These seem to be "enhanced" versions of Art I, which is a "survey" of drawing, painting, ceramics, sculpture, and other media. This could allow districts to "water down" their art programs with just these glorified versions of Art I, with students not being able to specialize or explore any of the various media in depth. Counselors might see this as a way of simplifying the scheduling process because they could deal with only four courses instead of routing students into the other rich and rigorous specialized offerings. **HOWEVER:** I do understand the committee's concern that smaller schools with perhaps only one art teacher may be struggling to offer the preferred and currently existing specialized courses in Art II-IV Painting, Drawing, Sculpture, Ceramics, Photography, etc.
- I don't believe that we need Art History II-IV. We currently offer AP Art History, and districts will have difficulty with staffing, scheduling, facilities, and resources as they attempt to populate these additional Art History courses. Art History should be "imbedded" in the other art courses.

- “Pre-AP” (“General Requirements” in Art, Levels I-II) is a local school district course designation – similar to honors courses. The College Board does not apply that designation, so the offering of **Pre-AP Art I and II** will need to be reconsidered.

DANCE, Grades K-8:

- The addition of **Dance, Grades 6-8** is absolutely needed! It is strongly encouraged because it will provide an aligned and sequential transition for high school dance courses, and it will assist school districts with compliance with the middle school fine arts course requirement for all students.
- Middle school dance could serve as a substitute for the “structured physical activity” requirement.
- I agree with the SBOE directive that Dance TEKS be developed for Grades 6-8, and that they be grade level specific with the originally proposed K-5 standards be imbedded in Grade 6.
- I agree with the SBOE directive that we NOT adopt TEKS for Dance, Grades K-5, because of serious ramifications and challenges with implementation of **DANCE K-5**, including but not limited to:
 - Certification of the classroom generalist teacher
 - Revision of dance certification from 8-12 to EC-12
 - Quality of instruction, since it will likely be taught by generalists or relegated to PE specialists which are normally not certified to teach dance
 - Students potentially discouraged from taking dance later if experience is not positive
 - Limited amount of instructional time, with negative impact on instructional time for other academic subjects in an already crowded schedule
 - Facilities
 - Funding

DANCE, Grades 9-12:

- I believe the draft is excellent in terms of content, relevance, and rigor.
- Adding the proposed variety of additional courses fills a crucial need. Many students across the state need and want to take multiple dance courses, and previously could not do so for state fine arts credit. This is an excellent step toward broadening the base of opportunities for dance education.
- Dance and Media Communications I is listed under the Dance II TEKS, and Dance and Media Communications II is listed under Dance III TEKS. (The “Media and Communications” courses in the other fine arts disciplines are listed under Levels I and II of the TEKS.) The levels should be consistent in all four fine arts disciplines; therefore, this course should be Levels I and II only, although they can be taken at any grade level. I would recommend that Dance I should be a prerequisite for this course.
- The committee’s adjustments and revisions are appropriate and sequential. They broaden the levels of awareness of dance forms and relevance to the body and mind, as well as encourage integration across the curriculum and the focus on higher thinking skills.

MUSIC, Grades K-5:

- I believe the draft is excellent in terms of sequence, content, and relevance, especially with the additional focus on music literacy.
- The increased specificity in the language is appropriate and appreciated.
- References to “movement” should count toward a portion of the requirements for “structured physical activity.”
- I concur with Ms. Lowe that there might be additional “cross-curricular” references.

MUSIC, Grades 6-8:

- Although there is less “specificity” than in Grades K-5, I believe the draft is excellent.
- In continuing to refine the TEKS at this level, the following priorities should be kept in mind:
 - Overall vertical alignment
 - Increased rigor and specificity relative to sequential instruction
 - Compartmentalized SEs in appropriate strands
- Under Creative expression/performance, there are SEs **(3)(A) and (B)** referring to timbre, intonation, rhythm, posture, embouchure, etc. I would recommend the addition of an SE that refers to *“clarity/accuracy of instrumental or vocal technique, including articulation, bowing, and/or diction.”*
- Vocal Ensemble should be added to **Music, Grades 7 & 8**, since Instrumental Ensemble (in addition to Jazz Band) is under grades 7-8, and Vocal Ensemble is offered as a music course in high school, Levels I-IV.

MUSIC, Grades 9-12:

- The draft includes excellent clarifications and specificity related to rigor.
- It is crucial that we not take any steps that dilute the excellence that Texas bands, choirs, and orchestras enjoy. I appreciate the committee’s stated goals (in their verbal report to the SBOE) of protecting the “performance standard” of our ensembles while:
 - Increasing the rigor and sequential instruction
 - Providing tools for college readiness
- We should add the word “articulation” to the list in **(2)(E) and (3)(F) in Music, Level I**, plus the related SEs in Levels II, III, and IV.
- **Pertaining to (4)(B) in Levels III and IV:** While composing and arranging music is an extremely valuable and appropriate enrichment activity in all music courses, I believe it is unnecessary to require “every student” taking band, choir, or orchestra to do this. (However, these ARE appropriate tasks for Music Theory or Composition.)
- I believe that the SEs of **(7)(B) and (7)(C)**, referring to “curriculum vita” and “personal comprehensive repertoire lists” are assignments rather than standards. While these can be extremely valuable as a local district option for the most serious music students, this level of specificity is unnecessary in this document, and should be deleted.

- **Applied Music I and II** is offered in the current Music TEKS. The new proposal offers **Applied Music I, II, and III**. It is still unclear why **Level III** is needed, and unclear why **Level IV** was not added. I recommend that we adopt **Levels I and II** only.
- I support the addition of Music and Media Communications, Levels I-II.
- It is unclear why Mariachi, Piano, and Guitar have been separated from **Instrumental Ensemble, Levels I-IV**.

MUSIC STUDIES:

- The creation of this category of “non-performance” music courses is a fabulous plan.
- I believe that the SEs for some of courses in this category, e.g. Music Appreciation, Music Theory, Music Business, etc. should each be different. There are just too many differences in the content. I concur that each will need its own PEIMS code, but some of these courses might need their own set of SEs, e.g., Music Theory or Composition.
- There is some concern about the change from Music History to Music Appreciation. They are not the same. Music Appreciation would seem to be a less rigorous content area. (However, I do see some rationale, in that students are able to achieve college/university dual credit in Music Appreciation because Music History is an upper level college/university course.) But again, there is just too much difference, so we should at least consider retaining Music History. **Possibility:** What if these two courses could be combined under another course title, e.g. “Consumer Music,” “Musicology,” or “Music History and Appreciation”
- The Knowledge Statements and Student Expectations are inconsistent with the stated rationale of the committee to combine “non-performance-based” music courses into one category. Specifically, **KS (3) Creative Expression**, requires students to “demonstrate or perform” in all six SEs.
- As in previous levels, and as per discussion in July by SBOE members, we should continue to strengthen skills through “cross-disciplinary” connections.

THEATRE, Grades K-5:

- I believe that the draft is generally very good in terms of content and rigor in the ideal world, but it is unrealistic for Texas public elementary schools. If we are to adhere to the drafted standards, elementary classroom teachers would need to set aside time for actually teaching “theatre,” as opposed to utilizing Theatre TEKS and creative dramatics to deliver instruction in various content areas. The current state-adopted teaching resources are geared to this model. I’m extremely concerned about compliance with the proposed level of detail.
- It must be kept in mind that in the vast majority of school districts, Theatre is not taught by a certified Theatre specialist, but rather by the generalist classroom teacher.
- Teachers will need to be schooled in the correct delivery and usage of basic theatrical terminology **(1)(G) in Theatre 4 and 5**.
- **Bottom line:** We must adopt standards that are realistic, and with which districts can indeed be compliant. We must keep in mind:
 - Vertical alignment K-12, but avoid excessive specificity and rigor until Grade 6, especially since instruction time will be extremely limited in K-5 (as it is currently in art and music.)

- Accessibility by the generalist teacher
- Flexibility of instructional delivery

THEATRE, Grades 6-8

- The draft is excellent in terms of structure, clarity, sequence, rigor, and relevance.
- In **Theatre 7 and 8, (3)(B)**, we must keep in mind the limits on facilities and access to facilities, including lighting and sound, that districts face. (As we look toward Proclamation 2015, we might want to look at “virtual” sound and light boards.)

THEATRE, Grades 9-12

- The addition of separate standards for Technical Theatre, Levels I-IV, Musical Theatre, Levels I-IV, and Theatre and Media Communications, Levels I-II is very appropriate.
- It is good that the committee is still recommending that Theatre Production be .5 or 1.0 credits. This fulfills real needs for campuses.
- The re-arrangement of selected SEs between strands, wordsmithing for clarity, addition of previously missing but crucial skills, alignment and scaffolding of KSs, and sequencing of SEs is appropriate.
- The International Baccalaureate (IB) Film course (SL and HL) should be added to the high school Theatre TEKS, Levels III-IV. Click on the following link to the IB Organization website for information pertaining to this course: <http://www.ibo.org/diploma/curriculum/group6/film.cfm>

MUSICAL THEATRE, Grades 9-12

- The draft is very comprehensive and sequential, and will provide badly needed consistency in instruction across the state.
- These TEKS will also ensure that students will study the genre, as opposed to simply “rehearsing and performing shows.”
- My concern is that it covers so much ground so quickly. The draft seems to almost be written specifically for the magnet school or fine arts academy high school where selected students are immersed in the program, and where there are multiple teachers of theatre.
- We need to be sure that it is a realistic and graduated approach to prepare students for this work in college or the profession. I am anxious to see the public input on this.

TECHNICAL THEATRE, Grades 9-12

- The adoption of TEKS for Technical Theatre is long overdue, and very much appreciated.
- The draft is extremely comprehensive, and pushes the envelope on rigor and content, especially at Level I. Unless there are multiple teachers, ample resources and equipment, and students who are focused on a career in the field, these expectations are unrealistic.
- On the positive side, there are definitely connections to components of science, math, history, and literature, as well as opportunities for extensive research.
- The standards are excellent, but I seriously doubt if many campus theatre programs can comply with these expectations. I recommend that we back off on expectations for early levels, and then develop them sequentially.

2. *Have the correct vocabulary and terminology been used? Where could changes be made for accuracy and/or clarity?*

- The identification of the four (or five) basic strands in the introductions of some disciplines seems difficult to read, partly because of the punctuation including colons, commas, and lack of capitalization.
- Not all disciplines identify the strands in the introduction in the same way. This is actually not necessary, but it would be good to be consistent between the disciplines.
- Each word in the title of the strands should be capitalized in all disciplines. In the draft, some are, and some are not.
- “Theatre” was sometimes misspelled in the high school Theatre TEKS (“Theater” – should be “Theatre” unless “Theater” is referring to a facility, not an academic discipline).
- Some disciplines have added a fifth strand of the TEKS, and the titles are slightly different between the disciplines. While the proposed strand titles seem to be make sense within each given discipline, the document as a whole might be more stakeholder-friendly if the disciplines all had the same four (or five) “basic” strand titles. This is especially true when we provide professional development at venues such as the Center for Educator Development in Fine Arts (CEDFA), with one strand at a time addressed in all four disciplines. However, I do understand the rationale for some customization, e.g. the removal of “performance” from the visual art language. I recommend FOUR basic strands that are common to all disciplines, with some customization within each discipline. **(See the recommendation in my responses to Question 8.)**
- I believe that “Jazz Band” should be changed to “Jazz Ensemble” under **Grades 7-8, and Levels I-IV.**
- Music and Media Communication I-II under the “Music studies” category should be Music and Media Communications I-II. (Add an “s” to “Communication.”)
- **Art, Grades 9-12,** under (c) (1) Foundations: observation and Perception: Add an “s” to *expand*, so the sentence reads “*The student develops and expands...*”
- Correct the spelling of “literature” in **(1)(C) in Theatre 5,** changing it from “literate” to “literature.”

3. *Are there specific areas that need to be reworked?*

- **Art, Grades 9-12:** “Student expectations” was added (in parentheses) next to “Knowledge and skills” in the high school Art TEKS, but not the elementary and middle school Art TEKS. If added to the Art TEKS, this term should also be added in the **Dance, Music, and Theatre TEKS** for consistency.
- **Dance and Media Communications I** is listed under the Dance II TEKS, and Dance and Media Communications II is listed under Dance III TEKS. (The “Media and Communications” courses in the other fine arts disciplines are listed under Levels I and II of the TEKS.) The levels should be consistent in all four fine arts disciplines. I would recommend that Dance I should be a prerequisite for this course.

- **Music and Media Communication I-II** should read **Music and Media Communications I-II**. (Add an “s” to “Communication”)
 - **Music, Grades 9-12:** In Levels III and IV, **KS (4)** should read “Creative Expression” instead of “Music Literacy.”
 - Correct the spelling of “literature” in **(1)(C) in Theatre 5**, changing it from “literate” to “literature.”
- 4. Are the fine arts concept/content statements grade-level appropriate? Are important concepts missing at any grade level?**
- **Music, Grades 9-12:** Curriculum vitae and audition SEs are not appropriate for every student. These are great optional enrichment opportunities for certain students, but should not be required for every high school music student.
 - **Theatre, Grades K-5:** There is too much detail to be successfully taught by the classroom generalist teacher. I worry about compliance, especially with the already crowded schedule and curriculum demands.
- 5. Are the Student Expectations (SEs) clear and specific?**
- Generally yes, but with some exceptions addressed in responses to other questions
- 6. Are the subject areas aligned horizontally and vertically?**
- Generally yes, but with some exceptions addressed in responses to other questions
- 7. Should consideration be given toward adding other courses at the high school level to provide more options for students?**
- NO. Many new courses have been proposed, and districts struggle with funding, staffing, scheduling, and facilities. We still have the option of Innovative Courses to meet local needs.
- 8. Do you have any other suggestions for ways in which the fine arts TEKS can be improved?**
- For professional development purposes, utilize the following “basic strand titles” for all disciplines (with customization within each document allowed as currently proposed). Dance and Theatre could “sub-caption” their two components of the Creative Expression strand with their respective documents. Each word to be capitalized in the titles as follows:
 1. **Foundations**
 2. **Creative Expression**
 3. **Historical and Cultural Relevance**
 4. **Critical Evaluation and Response**
 - Course prerequisites in each of the four fine arts disciplines should be stated and clear. Consistency pertaining to prerequisites across the Fine Arts TEKS for Art, Dance, Music, and Theatre is important. (This has been an ongoing problem over the years with the current TEKS.)
 - Use of technology in creating art should be emphasized in the Creative Expression strand in Grades 6-8 to prepare students for the various technological courses in the high school **Art** TEKS, including Art and Media Communications I-II.
 - Use of technology in creating music should be emphasized in the Creative Expression strand in Grades 6-8 to prepare students for the various technological courses in the high school **Music** TEKS, including Music and Media Communications I-II.

- Consider adding references to “portfolios” (physical or electronic) to the Critical/evaluation and response strand of the Fine Arts TEKS for all four disciplines. This seems relevant as an effective means of assessment, and is one of the primary reasons for the creation of Project Share.
- Consider adding “informal/formal performances” to the Creative expression strand of the Dance and Theatre TEKS (similar to the Music TEKS.) This would widen the scope of performances of which students are required to provide critical evaluations. It would also clarify that many performances are indeed “curricular” and not extracurricular. (See TEA/UIIL Side by Side.)
- **CRUCIAL:** Please ensure that all fine arts courses (with the exception of Theatre Production I-IV), are indeed full credit courses, and that unless there are extenuating circumstances related to students moving midyear to/from districts with limited offerings, students must take the **full course, as opposed to two half credits from different fine arts courses** to receive one State Fine Arts Credit. This is consistent with SBOE action in January, as follows from the minutes:

MOTION AND VOTE: *It was moved by Mr. Craig, seconded by Ms. Leo, and carried unanimously to recommend that the State Board of Education amend §74.72(b)(8), §74.73(b)(8) and §74.74(b)(8) to read as follows:*

“Fine arts--one credit. The credit may be selected from one full credit ~~or a combination of two half credits~~ from the following courses:

- (A) Art, Level I, II, III, or IV;
- (B) Dance, Level I, II, III, or IV;
- (C) Music, Level I, II, III, or IV;
- (D) Theatre, Level I, II, III, or IV;
- (E) Principles and Elements of Floral Design;
- (F) Digital Art and Animation; and
- (G) 3-D Modeling and Animation.”

NOTE: As stated under Question #1, with the revisions to the TEKS for ART I-IV, the last three courses above, which are Career and Technical Education and Technology Applications courses, should no longer substitute for state fine arts credit.