

Colorado Standards Review Committee for Dance
By Athena Baschal
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Along with two other CDA board members (Sandra Minton and Alicia Karczewski), I am serving on a newly formed committee sponsored by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to review the dance standards for the state of Colorado. Our work began with our first meeting in Denver last month, and will continue through the summer. So far we have been provided with a huge amount of information including dance standards from other states (Massachusetts, New Jersey) and countries (New South Wales, Scotland) along with a comprehensive report from WestEd, an educational advocacy agency from California. CDE contracted WestEd to conduct a review of Colorado's K-12 Model Content Standards (MCS). The findings and recommendations from this review are intended to inform decision-making by the CDE during its standards revision process.

Selection of committee members

Applicants for the review committee were solicited from across the state to apply the subject-specific education (early, K-12, and higher education) and business sector expertise. 786 people applied to fill 255 unpaid roles. Selection was made by Colorado stakeholders in a name-blind process using the merits of both the application and resumes.

Content subcommittees were formed in three phases - Phase I: Math, Science, Music and Music, Phase II: History, Civics, Geography and Economics, Phase III: Visual Arts, Theatre, Dance, Physical Education/Health and World Language).

After public feedback and official public hearings, the State Board of Education will decide which standards are adopted. This will occur by December 2009.

The four important new design features

The important differences in the new version of state standards will include four changes; 1) adding 21st century skills, 2) ensuring fewer, clearer and higher standards, 3) addition of early childhood, postsecondary and workforce readiness expectations, and 4) mastering concepts and skills...not just facts.

I am excited to be part of the revision process and have the opportunity to work with other dance professionals from many Colorado regions including Denver, Colorado

Springs, Castle Rock, Fort Collins, Beulah, and Vail. There are 14 of us on the committee. Judging from our first meeting, the other members seem as passionate about dance as I am. I am happy to see Dance on level ground with the other content areas. But I am cautiously optimistic. I see this process as a first step towards providing all Colorado students significant opportunities to study dance within the school system. There is a long road ahead of us before this goal becomes a reality. In my opinion, here are a few challenges facing dance education in Colorado:

- 1) Currently, the Colorado dance standards are “voluntary,” meaning that they do not have to be followed. In contrast, some other content area standards are “mandatory.”
- 2) Dance teacher certification is needed to ensure quality dance education for all students.
- 3) Creative funding needs to be addressed. It’s no surprise that arts are among the first subjects to be cut from a shrinking budget. We need to find other ways to provide funding for quality arts programs by working with arts organizations and other arts educators.

The Colorado Dance Alliance (CDA) is one state arts organization that is behind every dancer, teacher, choreographer, presenter, aficionado, vendor, company and every other conceivable dance entity in Colorado. We are working for the future of dance in our state, and appreciate all of your support.

For more information, visit the Colorado Department of Education website at http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_home.htm and click on Standards Review.