

Original: 2253

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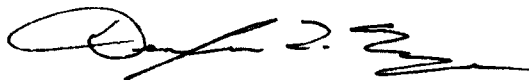
LANCASTER, PA

September 4, 2002

Dear Mr. Nyce,

It is my desire that the IRRC read and consider my concerns regarding the PA proposed Standards in Music, as presented and explained in my attached paper, "Standards is Pennsylvanian Music Education." I argue against adoption of the Standards as they are presently configured.

Very Truly Yours,



Douglas L. Nyce, M.A., Ed. M.
Musical Director, Ross Elementary School

Standards in Pennsylvania Music Education: A survey

**D. L. Nyce, 12-12-00, Foundations of Music Education
Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

Introduction

Since the issuance of the "National Standards for Arts Education" in 1994, state executives and legislative bodies have scrambled to react. These reactions, as they related specifically to the standards for music, have been greatly varied in their outcome, and I believe also in their intent. In some cases states have embraced the National Standards for Music, carefully aligning their state standards with the same, and perhaps even improving upon them. Massachusetts is a case in point, having also implemented performance-oriented standards and standardized state exams in music. Other states have ignored the National Standards completely. Pennsylvania governmental officials have taken a different tack. While recognizing the reality of standards as an important aspect of education, the governmental officials of Pennsylvania have, since 1996 especially, attempted to minimize the standardized requirements in music for its children. This minimization has at its root, I believe, a political philosophy which values local control over state control, local funding over state funding, and linguistic/logical mathematical intelligence over all other intelligences. One of the effects of this political philosophy has been a long delay in the implementation of standards in music, especially due to efforts to minimize the truly musical requirements within said standards.

In this paper, I intend to present and analyze the elementary level Musical standards of the "National Standards for Arts Education," which were created and published as a result of a Congressional mandate ("The Goals 2000: Educate America Act") and which were intended to encourage states to implement the standards or similar standards by the year 2000. I also intend to present and analyze the elementary level Pennsylvania State Standards in Music Education as presented in the "Proposed Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities," both the first (4/2000) and second revised (11/16/2000) versions issued for comment by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to the State Board of Education. Furthermore, I will present and analyze the elementary level standards in music issued by the School District of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in anticipation of the first efforts of the PA State Department of Education and in reaction to the National Standards, and those district standards as they were amended in late 1999 in anticipation of the first version issued by the Pennsylvania in early 2000. After presenting each set of standards, I will attempt to align those standards presented, commenting on the manner of their alignment and making final analytical conclusions.

The National Standards for Music Education (1994)

Issued as standards for children from age 2 through 18, the National Standards for Arts Education are truly comprehensive and enlightened in their scope. Since most children do not enter public school until age 5 in the United States, the National Standards immediately present a challenge to education as it is administered in the USA. Many industrialized nations of the world have free public school instruction available to children from age 3. The creators of the National Standards seemed to have recognized the wisdom of this approach, as early intervention is often the key to overcoming societal impediments to educational achievement. Furthermore, this approach is consistent with the overwhelming evidence that the most important years of learning are those first five years of life, when a child's aptitude is most sensitive to development in a host of areas, especially those areas linguistic and musical, though not limited to these.

Recognizing that "all children have musical potential", the creators of the National Standards insisted that "every student should have access to a balanced, comprehensive and sequential program of study in music." The elements of that program for grades K-4 are presented below:

1-Content Standard: Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music

- 2- Content Standard: Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
 - 3- Content Standard: Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
 - 4- Content Standard: Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines
 - 5- Content Standard: Reading and notating music
 - 6- Content Standard: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
 - 7- Content Standard: Evaluating music and music performances
 - 8- Content Standard: Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
 - 9- Content Standard: Understanding music in relation to history and culture
- (From "The National Music Education Standards", as presented on the "American Music Conference" Website).

Analysis

The National Standards are comprehensive in that they encompass the entirety of musical skills: performance as a singer, performance as an instrumentalist, improvisation, composition, arrangement, reading and notating music, etc. Yet they are not unmanageable, that is, they are realistic in their scope (though not presented here, they also seem to be realistic and manageable in their sequence). A music teacher could realistically teach and assess all of these standards within a school year, if given at least one 45-60 minute class period per week, per student, per school year.

The standardized content is also not exclusively musical. Included are skills such as analysis, description, evaluation, understanding interrelations between disciplines, understanding history, and understanding culture. These are valuable skills in any discipline and their inclusion here is testimony to the interrelation of all disciplines and to the equality of music's position as a discipline in the liberal arts and sciences. It is also clear that in order for one of these standards to be adequately taught to and assessed, many of the remainder of these standards must also be taught and assessed. For example, a complete music education in standard number one: singing, certainly requires standard three: improvising melodies, as well as standards five, six, seven and nine. For one is not a complete vocal musician without being able to read and notate music, listen to, analyze and describe music, evaluate one's own performance, and understand one's performed repertoire in relation to history and culture. The standards are dependent upon one another for support towards the goal of mastery of any one standard.

The Pennsylvania State Standards for Music Education, version one (April 7, 2000)

The first version of the Pennsylvania State Standards for Music Education, did not exist as such, but only as an assumed part of the Proposed Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities issued in early 2000. These standards were very different in scope from the National Standards for Music of 1994. Four over-arching areas of skill and knowledge were represented: 1- Production, Performance and Exhibition, 2- Historical and Cultural Contexts, 3- Critical Response, and 4- Aesthetic Response. Significantly, Music itself was not even mentioned in the table of contents, even as a sub-heading within these areas of skill and knowledge.

Recognizing only that "(m)usic education is an aural art form that satisfies the human need to respond to life experiences through singing, listening and/or playing an instrument" and recognizing music's place included within the arts, the standards are lacking in performance oriented skills, and largely focused on analysis and problem-solving. The following are the standards for music in the Kindergarten (age 5) through Grade 3 (age 8):

I. Production, Performance and Exhibition

A. Know and use the elements and principles of each art form to create works in the arts and humanities.

Elements of music: duration, intensity, pitch, timbre

Principles of music: composition, form, genre, harmony, rhythm, texture

B. Recognize and use a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce, review and revise original works in the arts.

C. Recognize and use fundamental vocabulary within each of the arts forms.

D. Use knowledge of varied styles within each art form through a performance or exhibition of unique work.

E. Demonstrate the ability to define objects, express emotions, illustrate an action or relate an experience through creation of works in the arts.

F. Identify works of others through a performance or exhibition.

G. Recognize the function of rehearsals and practice sessions.

H. Handle material, equipment and tools safely.

I. Identify arts events that take place in schools and in communities.

J. Know and use traditional and contemporary technologies for producing, performing and exhibiting works in the arts or the works of others.

K. Know and use traditional and contemporary technologies for furthering knowledge and understanding in the humanities.

II. Historical and Cultural Contexts

A. Explain the historical, cultural and social context of an individual work in the arts.

B. Relate works in the arts chronologically to historical events (10,000 BC to the present).

C. Relate works in the arts to varying styles and genre and to the periods in which they were created.

- D. Analyze a work of art from its historical and cultural perspective.
- E. Analyze how historical events and culture impact forms, techniques and purposes of works in the arts.
- F. Know and use appropriate vocabulary used between social studies and the arts and humanities.
- G. Relate works in the arts to geographic regions.
- H. Identify, describe and analyze the work of Pennsylvania Artists in dance, music theatre and visual arts.
- I. Identify, explain and analyze philosophical beliefs as they relate to works in the arts.
- J. Identify, explain and analyze historical and cultural differences as they relate to works in the arts.
- K. Identify, explain and analyze traditions as they relate to works in the arts.
- L. Identify, explain and analyze common themes, forms and techniques from works in the arts.

III Critical Response

- A. Recognize critical processes used in the examination of works in the arts and humanities.
- B. Know that works in the arts can be described by using the arts elements, principles and concepts.
- C. Know classification skills with materials and processes used to create works in the arts.
- D. Explain meanings in the arts and humanities through individual works and the works of others using a fundamental vocabulary of critical response.
- E. Recognize and identify types of critical analysis in the arts and humanities: contextual criticism, formal criticism and intuitive criticism.
- F. Know how to recognize and identify similar and different characteristics among works in the arts.
- G. Know and demonstrate what a critic's position or opinion is related to works in the arts and humanities.

IV. Aesthetic Response

- A. Know how to respond to a philosophical statement about works in the arts and humanities.
- B. Know how to communicate an informed individual opinion about the meaning of works in the arts.
- C. Recognize that the environment of the observer influences individual aesthetic responses to works in the arts.
- D. Recognize that choices made by artists regarding subject matter and themes communicate ideas through works in the arts and humanities.

Analysis

Clearly, these standards *qua* standards are unworkable. Anyone who has taught music in the classroom recently at this age-level knows that these standards would be quite impossible to assess. With one weekly 45 to 60 minute lesson, at best, the assessment of these standards would take every class period. It seems to me that what are presented as standards by the State of Pennsylvania are, in actuality, curricular goals and objectives which might only lead to the eventual development of standards. But they are certainly not practical standards created to be assessed in the classroom. In order to assess all of these standards, all instructional time would have to be replaced with assessment time, thus defeating the purpose of school: teaching and learning (though there is tremendous learning which can be achieved through certain manners of assessment process).

Weakening the importance of the standards, in my opinion, are the ambiguous statements which preface the various standards categories. The prefacing statement for I. Production, Performance and Exhibition is as follows: "Pennsylvania's public school shall teach, challenge and support every students to realize his or her maximum potential and to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to..." This statement does not *demand mastery* of anything. It requires nothing of the student. It is only a command to the public schools to "teach, challenge and support." I interpret this to imply that the students are not required to actually meet any of these standards. The other three categories are all similarly prefaced. A more straight-forward and demanding statement would be that "the students will" know how to, or describe, or perform, etc. With the prefacing statement given, the standards have no teeth, and though taught, may not need to be assessed at all. Perhaps this is why the standards are constructed more as curricular goals and objectives, as they are perhaps not intended to be assessed at any time.

As for the matter of **performance**, of the **thirty-four** standards presented, within the four "standards categories", only **three** involve musical performance. Music, clearly a performance-oriented discipline, performance being necessary for music's actuality as sound, is being twisted by these standards into the handmaiden of logical-mathematical and linguistic intellectual goals. This is particularly stunning, given that the standards presented in this paper are those recommended for the five to eight-year-olds. It is at this age that performance is of most critical importance, as research by Dr. E. Gordon has shown that the musical intelligence and aptitude are only developmental until around age nine. Children should be performing through singing and the playing of instruments on a constant basis at this age. Performance is critical for their development and for the reaching of their full individual musical potentialities.

Creativity, long the hallmark of the arts, is also largely absent from these standards. Of the **thirty-four** standards presented, only **four** involved creating original music. The greatest emphasis is upon non-musical activities. Fully **twenty-eight** of the **thirty-four** standards involve *non-musical activities* such as identification, recognition, description, analysis, handling, etc. This is quite developmentally inappropriate, and if implemented (which I think is quite impossible, practically), would result in a whole generation of Pennsylvania children without significant musical skills.

On the positive side, the inclusion of philosophy in the curriculum is laudable, even at this young age. However, to include it at the exclusion of other more directly musical standards is not appropriate. Including it only in the arts is also not appropriate. An official of the PA Department of Education told me that she felt it was important to keep philosophy in the music/arts standards because it was the last set of disciplines in which it continued to be included. If it is to be included, it should surely be included in the science, social studies, mathematics, etc. standards as well. Philosophy examines all of these disciplines and should not be shoved into the arts standards simply for the sake of its lone continuing inclusion in some area's standards.

As for their alignment with the National Standards of 1994, the Pennsylvania State Standards are clearly lacking in much specific reference to the National Standards. However, many can be interpreted to align. I've been as liberal in my interpretation as possible. National standard 5: reading and notating music, is not to be found in the PA standards, 1st revision, though it could be interpreted to be included in all those state standards which align with national standard 4. The alignments are as follows:

PA I. A: National 3 or 4, though PA I.A. does not specify improvisation or composition.

PA I. B: National 3 or 4, though PA I.B. does not specify improvisation or composition.

PA I. C: National 6, 7, and 8 would utilize this vocabulary.

PA I. D: National 1, 2, 3, or 4, though singing, playing an instrument, improvisation or composition are not specified

PA I. E: National 3 or 4, though PA I.E. does not specify improvisation or composition.

PA I. F: National 1 or 2, though singing or playing an instrument are not specified.

PA I. G: no alignment

PA I. H: no alignment
PA I. I: no alignment
PA I. J: National 1, 2, 3, or 4, though singing, playing an instrument, improvisation or composition are not specified.
PA I. K: National 8

PA II. A: National 9
PA II. B: National 9
PA II. C: National 9
PA II. D: National 9
PA II. E: National 9
PA II. F: National 9
PA II. G: National 9
PA II. H: National 9
PA II. I: no alignment
PA II. J: National 9
PA II. K: National 9
PA II. L: National 6 and 7

PA III. A: National 6 and 7
PA III. B: National 6 and 7
PA III. C: National 6 and 7
PA III. D: National 6, 7 and 8
PA III. E: National 6, 7 and 8
PA III. F: National 6 and 7
PA III. G: no alignment (this PA standard should, I think, read “how a critic’s position” not “what a critic’s position” In its present state it is indecipherable.

PA IV. A: no alignment
PA IV. B: no alignment
PA IV. C: no alignment
PA IV. D: no alignment

The Pennsylvania State Standards for Music Education, version two (November 16, 2000)

The outcry resultant from the issuance of the first version of the Pennsylvania standards resulted in the rapid revision and release of the second version in November of 2000. I will not present the entirety of these standards, but shall only attempt to delineate how this version differs from version one of April, 2000. Firstly, the word music now appears in the table of contents, a small matter, and significant of other small changes. However, the standards for music continue to be encased in, and restricted by, the “Proposed Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities.” The standards continue to be grouped under the headings of the “standards categories.” The labeling of the first category has changed to a slight degree, from “Production, Performance and Exhibition” to the new “Production, Performance and Exhibition of Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts.” This change is reflected in the standards within this category. The other categories have not changed, either in their labeling or in their content. The standard which has been altered is as follows:

I.B. “Recognize and use a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce, review and revise original works in the arts” has become in the revision (changes are in bold), “Recognize, **know**, use and **demonstrate** a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce, review and revise original works in the arts. **Music: sing, play an instrument, read and notate music, compose and arrange, improvise.**” The effect of this change is to clearly mention reading and notating of music for the first time, as well as mentioning composition, arrangement and improvisation as distinctive skills. Furthermore, this change adds another standard to the list of those which involve some performance aspect.

Sadly, this is the only change which I can find from the first to the second version. Nearly all of the criticisms involved with my analysis of the first version continue to apply to the second. Of the **thirty-four** standards presented, only **four** involve performance, an increase of **one**. The alignments with the national standards would be the same as in the first revision, saving only the inclusion of an alignment with national standard 5, reading and notating music with PA standard I.B.

The School District of Lancaster Standards for Music Education (August 1998)

Here presented are the SDOL Standards for Music Education as created in anticipation of the Pennsylvania State Standards, and in light of the National Standards of 1994. The goals of the program for the SDOL were stated as such: "to provide all students with a life-long capacity to use appropriate background skills and knowledge from music education in solving problems, making decisions, answering questions, and growing personally" (SDOL Document, August 1998). The standards of the SDOL had by this time already undergone extensive revisions in an effort to make them as focused on musical skills and knowledge and as manageable in the classroom situation as possible. The standards for primary level, grades Kindergarten through Third, are as follows:

Item #1: Students will sing simple melodies accurately and independently.

Item #2: Students will play melodies accurately and independently.

Item #3: Students will improvise melodies and rhythms.

Item #4: Students will compose instrumental and vocal melodies.

Item #5: Students will describe components of music performance.

Item #6: Students will perform music of varied cultures and traditions.

At the Intermediate level, Grades 4 and 5, subtle changes occur in the complexity and emphases of the standards:

Item #1: Students will sing selected melodies accurately and independently as solo performers and with others.

Item #2: Students will play selected melodies accurately and independently as solo performers and with others.

Item #3: Students will improvise melodies and rhythms within a musical structure.

Item #4: Students will compose and arrange music within specified parameters.

Item #5: Students will compare music performances and identify elements of the compositions performed.

Item #6: Students will recognize music of varied cultures and traditions.

Analysis

Clearly, the SDOL Standards for Music Education (August 1998) were conceived to align with the National Standards (1994). The alignment is as follows:

SDOL 1: National 1

SDOL 2: National 2

SDOL 3: National 3

SDOL 4: National 4

SDOL 5: National 6 and 7
SDOL 6: National 1 and 9

Directly excluded are only National 5, reading and notating, and National 8, understanding in relation to other disciplines. I believe that the creators of the SDOL standards of 1998 intended that the reading and notating of music should be encompassed with the SDOL standards 1, 2, 3, and 4, and therefore need not be assessed as a separate standard. I believe this was a wise effort on behalf of simplicity and manageability within the limited time constraints of music instruction. The purpose of the exclusion of National Standard 8 is in question. However, it is my opinion that, given the limitations previously expressed, the creators of the SDOL standards excluded National Standard 8 purposefully, for the sake of efficiency and manageability. Along with this pragmatic intention, I believe the creators of the SDOL standards intended to put exceptional emphasis on those skills which are truly unique to music, in particular: singing, playing instruments, improvising, and composing. Also, at the primary level, the standards reflect the necessity of emphasis upon building audiatonal skills through performance, as SDOL standard 6 dictates the performance of songs at this level, while it transitions to the recognition of such at the intermediate level.

The School District of Lancaster Standards for Music Education (1999)

Prior to, but anticipating the issuance of the Pennsylvania State Standards of 2000, and in reaction to the placement of the SDOL on the state's "empowerment" list (a list of school districts not meeting a certain standard in PSSA test scores; the PSSA being primarily a test of English linguistic and logico-mathematical achievement), the SDOL greatly altered their standards in music, devolving the six previous standards into two standards believed by the SDOL to reflect accurately the wishes of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Governor, and Legislature of the State of Pennsylvania. The National Standards were now of no concern, all purely performance-oriented standards being eliminated as standards necessary for promotion/graduation from any level. Thus remaining were only SDOL standard #5, describing and comparing music performances, and SDOL standard #6, performing, recognizing and describing music of various cultures and traditions as assessable and reportable standards for the purpose of promotion/graduation. I believe that this change reflected a fear on the part of administrators of a take-over of the district by the state if PSSA test scores in reading, writing and mathematics did not improve. This is reflected in the lack of alignment with the now seemingly irrelevant National Standards of 1994. Only National 6, 7, and 9 now directly align with the SDOL standards in music. National 1 and 2 only align cursorily, and only at the earliest age-group assessed. Following movement to the 4th grade level, performance is not necessary to fulfill SDOL standard #6.

Conclusions

The National Standards of 1994 are valuable in many ways. Of special positive interest to the classroom teacher are their 1- comprehensive scope, 2- developmentally appropriate sequencing, and 3- manageability as standards for assessment. The Pennsylvania Standards of 2000, in both the original and revised versions are of special negative interest to the classroom teacher for three parallel reasons: 1- their comprehensive, yet unbalanced scope, 2- developmentally inappropriate sequencing (and lack of any reference to pre 5 year-olds), and 3-unmanageability as standards for assessment. They are a dismal failure, especially in the light of the fact that their creators had the benefit of the work done by the creators of the National Standards of 1994 at their disposal. The SDOL standards are evidence that, in spite of the excellence of the National Standards, in the U.S.A. (since education is traditionally, as per the U.S. Constitution, relegated being a state and local governmental matter) state governments can and do diminish the excellence attainable within said states (often for largely partisan political reasons rather than educational reasons) by imposing inadequate and/or inappropriate standards of their own on local school districts.

I recommend that the government of Pennsylvania review their standards in music: removing them from the arts and humanities standards, aligning them with the National Standards of 1994, and developing and implementing state examinations in music which test student performance in relation to the standards. In this way the state may be a facilitator of excellence in music, rather than an impediment to it. The children and educators of Pennsylvania deserve no less.



Resources:

Core Content Document, Music, School District of Lancaster, August 1998

Learning Sequences in Music, Dr. E. Gordon, GIA Pub., rev. 1997

Massachusetts Department of Education Website, Music Standards of 1993

National Standards for Arts Education, Music Educators National Conference, 1994

Proposed Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities, PA Department of Education, 4/700

Proposed Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities, PA Department of Education, revised 11/16/00