Collaboration Between Special Education and Arts Education: Negotiating Standards for Teachers and Students

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The development and revision of educational standards tends to follow a trajectory coinciding with emergent national priorities. Standards for teaching professions in various disciplines can include professional education standards and student proficiency standards. One goal of standards revision is to respond to unmet targeted outcomes within educational systems. Additional objectives for developing new professional education standards or new student proficiency standards include guiding professional responsibility and practice, identifying what teachers or students should know and be able to do in particular subject areas, setting a framework for curricular content, and providing guidelines for student assessment (CEC, 2015; NCCAS, 2016).

Because roles and responsibilities differ for teachers of special education and arts education, standards for teaching differ as well, establishing what teachers need to know and be able to do in the context of their area of certification. Although both arts educators and special educators are expected to advance the knowledge of students, preparing them for adulthood, their professional preparations and practices follow a different approach. Arts educators must know and be able to teach the content of their subject matter, specifically dance, media arts, music, theater, or visual arts, to all students. In addition to following professional education standards required of all teachers, they are guided by programs or student proficiency standards particular to their subject matters. Special educators must also follow professional standards required of all teachers and possess a knowledge base about and be able to teach students with disabilities across the curriculum.

Collaboration between arts educators and special educators can result in positive outcomes for students with disabilities by facilitating opportunities for full participation, increased independence, the development of artistic and personal competencies, the conveying of sophisticated ideas, and advancements in academic and social/emotional skills (Crockett, Berry, & Anderson, 2015; Malley & Silverstein, 2014). In addition, students without disabilities benefit from engagement in arts learning with students with disabilities, developing increased respect and understanding (Malley & Silverstein, 2014). How well teachers deliver content, services, and supports to students with disabilities in arts education relies on the quality of and adherence to professional and program standards, the ability of teachers to translate standards into practice, and the
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opportunity for teachers to learn from one another. This chapter examines the set of K-12 student proficiency standards that provide a teaching framework for arts educators and the professional standards of practice particular to special education. These two types of standards reveal the depth of knowledge and professional approaches expected of teachers and provide a framework for collaborative efforts.

**What Arts Students Should Know and Be Able to Do:**

**Student Standards in Arts Education**

The 2014 National Core Arts Standards (NCAS) serve as a revision of the first set of student proficiency standards in dance, music, theater, and visual arts education, released in 1994. The carefully crafted approach to rewriting the student standards included particular attention to the needs of students with disabilities. The standards guide teachers in each arts discipline by identifying learning desired for all students (NCCAS, n.d.).

**Historical Perspective**

In the 1950s, after the Soviet Union’s launch of Sputnik, arts educators, working collectively to represent the various arts disciplines, mounted concerted lobbying efforts in reaction to the US government’s new emphasis on science and mathematics programs. Arts education funding in schools continued at the state and local levels, with only a small percentage of expenditure allocated by the federal government (Heilig, Cole, & Aguilar, 2010).

In 1987, Frank Hodsoll, as head of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), noted the organization’s role in promoting the work of visiting artists in schools over that of arts teachers. Aligning with certified teachers, he advocated for professional standards to include improved teacher quality and recruitment, sequential curricula, comprehensive testing, improved data gathering, and increased educational responsibility (Heilig et al., 2010). In 1988, the NEA reported on the status of arts education as mandated by Congress. The report indicated that arts education was under-resourced compared to other core subject areas and offered recommendations for arts education curricula; testing and evaluation; teacher preparation and certification; research priorities; and national, state, and local leadership responsibilities (National Endowment for the Arts, 1988).

Federal involvement in public education increased in the 1990s, particularly with the passage of the 1994 Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Title II of the Educate America Act set forth a National Education Standards and Improvement Council, with the task of identifying professional organizations and leading educators to develop educational standards. The overall purpose of the standards was to define what students should know and be able to do so that they could “learn to use their minds well… to be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our nation’s modern economy” (NCCAS, 2016, p. 5). National arts education associations were lobbying for inclusion in lists of required basic subjects, and through their efforts, the act included arts education as challenging subject matter in which all students should demonstrate competency (Heilig et al., 2010).

Impelled by Goals 2000, service organizations, educators, and professionals representing dance, music, theater, and visual arts education wrote the first national voluntary arts education standards, known as the National Standards for Arts Education, in 1994. The standards provided achievement expectations for students in grades 4, 8, and 12. Over time, they were adopted or adapted by many states, and other states developed standards independently, leaving only one state—Iowa—without state arts standards (Arts Education Partnership, 2014; NCCAS, 2016).
Developing the National Core Arts Standards

The National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) arose out of an initial meeting of 50 arts education organizations, researchers, and other stakeholders to determine a plan of action for revising the 1994 standards in 2010. The State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education hosted the meeting in response to the release of the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics, revisions underway in national science and social studies standards, and the anticipated release of the Arts Skills Map by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (NCCAS, n.d.).

Work on the Conceptual Framework for Arts Education began within a year in 2011, with members of the newly formed coalition including professional organizations representing arts educators across disciplines. Media arts were represented by the Media Arts Committee or MAC. This small group of individuals included in NCCAS provided parity for the discipline as no professional service organization for media arts education existed.

First, NCCAS contracted a national expert in arts education as project director, and then writing chairs for each arts discipline were identified. In December 2011, writing teams comprised of national leaders and master teachers in the five arts disciplines of dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts were announced. The project director, chairs, and writers relied on the conceptual framework to guide writing of the grade-by-grade standards. In 2013, a series of three public reviews informed revisions of the standards, and they were launched in June of 2014. The NCAS, a comprehensive set of grade-by-grade student proficiency standards for each of the five arts disciplines, are available on an interactive website, www.nationalartsstandards.org (NCAS, 2014).

Philosophy and Knowledge Bases Informing Arts Education Standards

The overarching goal of the 2014 NCAS is to identify learning desired for all students and guide key concepts, processes, and outcomes in each arts discipline (NCCAS, 2016). According to the Department of Education’s report on the status of arts education in public schools during the first decade of the 21st century, arts education infrastructure is well established, but there are vast discrepancies across the US in availability (NCCAS, 2016; Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012). Revision of the 1994 standards was necessary in part because of immense changes in art making and tools available for teaching in all art forms (NCCAS, n.d.). Access to an array of art making tools stems from technological advances, which have resulted in widespread development and use of personal computers, blended platforms for creating a variety of media, and multiple worldwide communication modes—hence, the identification of a new arts discipline, media arts, to encompass the art emerging from many of the new technologies. Another reason for revision of the standards arose from a policy perspective to affirm arts education as a core academic subject (NCCAS, n.d.). This was substantiated with the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), in which arts education is included in a “well-rounded education.”

The NCCAS included the College Board, which conducted six research projects to inform development of the standards. Projects examined international arts education standards, college learning in the arts, and child development and arts education, and reviewed connections among the Common Core State Standards and arts learning as well as arts education standards and 21st-century skills. Philosophical foundations and lifelong goals that lead to artistic literacy form the basis of the standards in the following areas: (a) the arts as communication; (b) the arts as creative personal realization; (c) the arts as culture, history, and connectors; (d) the arts as means to well-being; and (e) the arts as community engagement (NCCAS, n.d.).

At the core of the standards is a structure that allows educators to give all students key arts experiences that facilitate artistic literacy. Students’ artistic literacy requires their authentic

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engagement in artistic creation processes and their using arts materials and tools in appropriate spaces. Students and teachers must engage fully in arts activities that allow for creative practices of imagination, investigation, construction, and reflection, expressing their unique experiences. The standards allow for and encourage creative thinking, logical reasoning, and metacognition, providing students with opportunities to realize their creative potentials. By studying the work of others and their own art, students can explore and strive to understand the broad human condition (NCCAS, 2016).

**Structure of the Arts Education Standards**

The design of the NCAS is based on measurable and attainable learning events rather than a provision of lists of what students should know and do. The Understanding by Design© Framework by McTighe and Wiggins served as a model for structuring the standards in that educators are guided to identify important outcomes of learning, determine the evidence for attainment, and then design the path for achievement. The standards progress across grades and levels in a sequential approach designed to take place within the context of rich, rigorous, and supportive learning environments (NCCAS, n.d.). Artistic processes of creating, performing/presenting/producing, responding, and connecting unify the standards across and within arts disciplines. Anchor standards across arts disciplines deconstruct the artistic process and describe actions required for each of the arts processes. Performance standards translate the anchor standards into measurable goals and are unique to each of the arts disciplines. Instructional resources for each of the standards include enduring understandings, essential questions, model cornerstone assessments, and process components. Overall, the standards provide a logical, sequential map for engaging all students in authentic, meaningful pre-K through grade 12 arts education experiences (McCaffrey & Malley, 2015).

The model cornerstone assessments (MCAs) for grades 2, 5, 8, and high school in each arts discipline are curriculum-embedded, authentic, and make use of genuine performance rather than summative testing of knowledge (NCCAS, n.d.). They provide examples of authentic assessments and demonstrate how the standards can be implemented. The MCAs were released at the same time as the standards so that teachers could see the connection between the standards and assessment tasks (Shaw, 2014). With the support of two grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the coalition piloted the MCAs at the elementary and secondary levels. Benchmarked student work associated with the MCAs is available on the NCAS website. The coalition engaged several hundred educators during the period of administering the assessments. Ongoing improvements were made to the performance tasks based on the results of the national pilots. This major undertaking provided verification that the MCAs provide a sound means of evaluating the quality of instruction and learning in arts education.

The NCAS website is designed for cross-referencing so that teachers can access material based on more than one criterion. Search options include artistic processes, anchor standards, arts discipline, process components, grade level, and more. Thus, teachers can identify criteria that fit their requirements and create a customized handbook for their purposes. Additional resources include a glossary for each of the arts disciplines, an assessment glossary, and links to the College Board research studies.

**Considerations for Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in the Arts Education Standards**

A key component of the NCAS is the intentional use of language that allows for inclusion of all students, regardless of their abilities, within the standards themselves. This sets a precedent in developing instructional subject matter standards. The process for the development of the Common
Core State Standards (CCSS), launched in 2009 and released in 2010 (CCSS Initiative, 2016), did not intentionally include students with disabilities; however, special education stakeholders were tasked with addressing their inclusion in the CCSS after their completion. The resulting document provides succinct guidance for including students with disabilities in the CCSS and emphasizes the importance of high expectations at grade-level instruction for all students (CCSS Initiative, n.d.). Since the release of the Common Core, special education leaders and state and local educational organizations have responded by providing numerous resources for teachers and working to interpret the standards for instructing and providing alternate assessments for students with significant disabilities (see, for example, California Department of Education, n.d.; National Center and State Collaborative, n.d.).

The NCCAS invited a team of arts and special education leaders under the direction of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Art’s VSA to review each iteration of the standards during the writing process. Approaching the language from a universal design for learning perspective, the team provided feedback that facilitated broadly written standards, enabling multiple means of engaging in the artistic processes. In addition, the team provided inclusion strategies for each of the model cornerstone assessments and resources included on the website. An accompanying document provides general guidance to arts teachers working with students with disabilities when implementing the standards (Malley, 2014). Taken together, the body of work on inclusion in the NCAS represents the extent to which arts educators seriously consider their responsibilities to all students, with particular considerations for students with disabilities.

**Expectations for Implementation of the Arts Education Standards**

Ahead of the release of the NCAS, all of the states but one—Iowa—had established elementary and secondary arts education standards. Of those states, 27 defined the arts as core or academic subjects, and 33 had either revised their standards or adopted them for the first time since 2006. In 2010, the same year that the CCSS in mathematics and English language arts were launched, 11 states revised or adopted their arts standards. However, considering a state’s number of policies and adoption of standards does not accurately reflect actual support for arts education. Some states rely on local control, and others provide extensive resources without legal mandates (Arts Education Partnership, 2014).

Policy for arts education is most effective when framed within the overall context of state goals and priorities for K-12 education. The 2009–2010 federal survey of public elementary and secondary schools revealed that there are still millions of elementary students not receiving arts instruction as a part of their regular education (Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012). These students disproportionately attend high-poverty schools, likely with a higher number of English-language learners and students with disabilities who could benefit from education in and through the arts (Arts Education Partnership, 2014).

Adoption of the NCAS by states addresses discrepancies revealed in the 2009–2010 survey by providing a comprehensive, systematic foundation across arts disciplines for states to reference or utilize. As of January 31, 2017, 15 states had adopted the standards or adapted a version of the standards. Nineteen states were in the process of revising their state arts standards and basing new arts standards on or aligning prior state arts standards to the NCAS (M. McCaffrey, personal communication, March 3, 2017; NCCAS, 2017).

**What Special Educators Should Know and Be Able to Do:**

**Professional Standards in Special Education**

Special education professional standards have undergone a recent revision, with the first set of standards established in 1984. The standards for practice set forth the knowledge and skills special educators need in the delivery of individualized educational services and supports to students with disabilities (CEC, 2015). These services include providing consultation and resources to other educators.
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**Historical Perspective**

Founding of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), a professional association of educators dedicated to advancing the success of students with exceptionalities, occurred in 1922, with advancement of professional standards one of its primary goals (CEC, 2016). Standards for special educators were not intentionally addressed again until 1965, when CEC hosted a national conference focused on the topic of professional standards. It was not until 1981, however, that the organization initiated the development of written professional standards for special educators (CEC, 2015).

Formalized professional standards in special education evolved from educational reform movements in the 1970s and 1980s. Reforms in the 1970s centered on the transformation of schools into academic centers of excellence, employing top-down learning based on mandated state and national standards for curricula and testing, and teacher promotion and retention. In the 1980s, reactions to the structures in place from earlier reforms led to emphasis on processes over outcomes, with bottom-up approaches that included school-based management, teacher empowerment, and professionalization. Thus, educators began to collaborate and build communities of practice within their schools, and outcomes were de-emphasized (Boscardin, 2011). At the same time, evidence indicated little coordination and collaboration between general education and special education teachers, resulting in less than desirable learning opportunities for students with disabilities. With an emphasis on the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education, the role of special educators became more complex as they were expected to have knowledge and skills to address the needs of students with disabilities as well as work alongside general education teachers (McCray, Butler, & Bettini, 2014). Recognizing that teachers’ preparation and knowledge had direct effects on the quality of students’ learning, CEC’s Delegate Assembly in 1981 initiated the development of teacher preparation and certification standards and a professional code of ethics for special educators (CEC, 2015).

In 1984, CEC published the first set of standards, which were revised over time to include 10 Initial Specialty Sets and 12 Advanced Specialty Sets to reflect different disability areas, state licensure structures, and advanced roles of special educators. These sets of criteria for knowledge and skills at the initial and advanced level were used to review special education teacher preparation programs until 2004. Then the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) review process prioritized performance-based measures, requiring CEC to develop a single set of initial and advanced preparation standards. This set is no longer used for program review but continues to provide the foundation on which CEC bases the current initial and advanced preparation standards (CEC, 2015).

A more recent development in educational reform occurred with the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002). A new era of accountability, marked by federally mandated student assessments and teacher performance standards, seemed to be yet another pendulum swinging in reaction to prior practices. Expectations for student achievement and teacher practices alike were historically higher under the No Child Left Behind Act than in any other time in US history, raising new concerns about the link between teaching and student learning (Boscardin, 2011; Boscardin & Lashley, 2012). Most students with disabilities continued to demonstrate poor academic performance under NCLB, and multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), such as School-wide Positive Behavior Supports for students with behavioral challenges and Response to Intervention for students with academic challenges, have been developed to address their needs (McCray, Butler, & Bettini, 2014).

Now, with the passage of the ESSA (2015) in response to the limitations and accountability mandates of NCLB and advocacy at the state level for more control over student standards and testing options, a new era of reform centers on assuring equitable learning among all students. The new act empowers state and local districts to focus on school improvement based on goals
rather than test scores and specifically addresses ways to redirect resources for struggling schools and students who are most vulnerable, such as students with disabilities. The ESSA requires states to develop meaningful goals for the progress of all students, with a focus on equitable education to ensure that every student subgroup, including students with disabilities, has opportunities to achieve college and career readiness (White House Press Office, 2015).

Developing the Current CEC Professional Standards

The current revision of professional standards for special educators was completed in 2012, following the guidelines for educational program standards established by the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), which became the accrediting body after the merger of NCATE and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council. The process for revising the prior 2009 standards was collaborative and member-driven, representing the broad constituents of CEC. Thousands of practicing special educators, along with the CEC Knowledge and Skills Subcommittee, contributed to the revision (CEC, 2015).

Philosophy and Knowledge Bases Informing the Standards for Special Educators

Developers of the revised standards used a rigorous consensual validation process based on a thorough review of current empirical research, disciplined inquiry, and informed theory and practice, to update the Specialty Sets that serve as a foundation for the standards. Surveys of stakeholders ensured rigor and essential elements for beginning practice (CEC, 2015).

The standards are intended to serve as a benchmark for skills and knowledge needed by all special educators at entry-level and advanced practice. They serve as criteria for professional practice and for developing and revising policy and procedures for program accreditation. The revised standards are based on current best practices and reflect sensitivity to the diversity of students. Underlying the standards is research-based knowledge that “well-prepared special education professionals are the cornerstone of the delivery of quality evidence-based practices to individuals with exceptionalities” (CEC, 2015, p. 19).

Structure of the Standards for Special Educators

There are two sets of standards: professional ethical principles and practice standards, and professional preparation standards. The professional ethical principles and practice standards provide guidance for how special educators should practice in a way that is respectful of all students with exceptionalities. The professional preparation standards delineate the knowledge and skills needed by special educators for safe and effective practice. Within the professional preparation standards are two sets, Standards for Initial Preparation of Special Education Professionals and Standards for the Preparation of Advanced Special Education Professionals. The advanced standards are for those special educators training for new roles, such as transition specialists or special education administrators.

All of the standards are based on the CEC Specialty Sets. There are now 11 Initial Specialty Sets and 11 Advanced Specialty Sets. There are seven Initial Preparation Standards within the following categories: (a) learner development and individual learning differences, (b) learning environments, (c) curricular content knowledge, (d) assessment, (e) instructional planning and strategies, (f) professional learning and ethical practice, and (g) collaboration. In addition, there are seven Advanced Preparation Standards within the following categories: (a) assessment; (b) curricular content knowledge; (c) programs, services, and outcomes; (d) research and inquiry; (e) leadership and policy; (f) professional and ethical practice; and (g) collaboration (CEC, 2015). All of the special education specialty sets and standards can be found at www.cec.sped.org/Standards.
Expectations for Implementation of the Standards for Special Educators

CEC has worked to ensure that standards for special educators provide a framework for state teacher licensure and are used in the national accreditation process. State adoption of the standards addresses three challenges within the special education profession: the shortage of qualified special educators, an unequal distribution of qualified special educators across the US, and working conditions that affect the retention of well-qualified special educators (CEC, 2015). The standards are meant to serve special educators throughout their professional careers, ensuring that they have “the necessary expertise to practice safely, ethically, and effectively” (CEC, 2015, p. 14). Special education teacher preparation programs are accredited through CAEP, which partners with CEC to ensure that the programs meet the Initial and/or Advanced Preparation Standards. Currently, over 1,000 special education preparation programs have been accredited. Additionally, most states align licensing requirements for special educators with the CEC standards (CEC, 2015).

Arts Education and Special Education Standards Guiding Collaboration

The purpose of arts education is to provide students a means to artistic literacy through engagement in authentic creative practices, which include an awareness of cultural and historical context. Student proficiency standards provide a framework for the delivery and assessment of arts education and inform policy makers about the value and implementation of arts programs (NCCAS, 2016). The purpose of special education is to apply specialized knowledge and skills to individualize learning for students with exceptionalities, in both specialized and general education curricula (CEC, 2015). The professional standards for special educators inform and guide professional practice so that students with exceptionalities can fully engage in and access learning. Taken together, these two sets of standards inform arts curricula content and delivery for all students and professional practice for students with particular needs.

Collaboration Guidelines

All students have the right to the same educational goals and standards, including students with disabilities (ESSA, 2015). Thus, all teachers, including arts teachers, are required to teach students with disabilities and have access to specific knowledge and skills drawn from the field of special education (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, 2001). In addition, students with disabilities must be appropriately accommodated to participate in general education curricula and assessments (IDEA, 2004).

Special Educators

To support students in arts education, special educators are guided by the Initial Preparation Standard 7: Collaboration under the Initial Common Specialty Items (CEC, 2015). The knowledge needed for collaboration related to working with arts education teachers includes understanding of (a) models and strategies of consultation and collaboration; (b) roles of individuals with exceptionalities, families, and school and community personnel in the planning of an individualized program; and (c) culturally responsive factors that promote effective communication and collaboration with individuals with exceptionalities, families, school personnel, and community members (CEC, 2015, p. 44). The skills needed to collaborate with arts education teachers include the ability to (a) maintain confidential communication about individuals with exceptionalities; (b) collaborate with families and others in the assessment of individuals with exceptionalities; (c) foster respectful and beneficial relationships between families and professionals; (d) collaborate
with school personnel and community members in integrating individuals with exceptionalities into various settings; (e) use group problem-solving skills to develop, implement, and evaluate collaborative activities; (f) model techniques and coach others in the use of instructional methods and accommodations; and (g) communicate with school personnel about the characteristics and needs of individuals with exceptionalities (CEC, 2015, p. 44).

Simonsen et al. (2010) indicated that a special educator’s role should be redefined as that of an interventionist, working across tiers of instruction to “collect and interpret data,… collaborate effectively with general education teachers,… and ensure fidelity of evidence-based instructional methods” (p. 20). In this role, special educators serve “as trainers, consultants, and collaborators with general educators to implement universal supports” (p. 21). Often, special educators serve in this capacity, although the responsibilities might not be specifically delineated. The role of interventionist is one way of articulating how special educators can support the needs of students with disabilities in arts classrooms.

**Arts Educators**

Certain actions by arts educators can facilitate collaborative efforts with special educators. Arts educators should take ownership for the learning of all students and consider the specific needs of students with disabilities. When arts educators plan lessons in advance of classes, special educators are able to work with them to plan strategies and provide meaningful accommodations and modifications. Arts educators should maintain open communication and participate in regularly scheduled meetings to discuss student progress and needs with special educators (McCray et al., 2014).

Additional guidance for arts teachers working with students with disabilities is encompassed in six guiding principles published as NCAS resources, which form a basis for collaboration among arts teachers, special education personnel, and administrators (Malley, 2014). These principles reflect best practices inherent in both the student proficiency arts standards and special education standards. Arts teachers are expected to understand and use the principles through collaborative efforts made by special educators who have been well prepared to teach students with disabilities via their professional standards. Special educators provide information and technical assistance so that students with disabilities might have access to the same arts education goals as all other students. The six guiding principles are: (a) maintain high expectations, (b) promote communicative competence, (c) use the principles of universal design for learning, (d) know how to select and use appropriate accommodations for individual students, (e) make use of evidence-based practices, and (f) target instruction and use formative indicators of student performance (Malley, 2014).

**MAINTAIN HIGH EXPECTATIONS**

Foremost in collaboration is that all teachers maintain high expectations of all students. Working toward grade-level standards applies to all students, and most students with disabilities will be able to achieve them with appropriate supports (Thompson, Morse, Sharpe, & Hall, 2005). The NCAS adhere to this approach through rigorous, unified sets of key concepts and processes. These are structured to allow teachers to design instruction and materials that enable students with wide-ranging abilities to interact with content. Arts teachers ensure that all students are working toward grade-level standards, with special educators collaborating to provide strategies for specially designed instruction and accommodations (Malley, 2014).

**PROMOTE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

The NCAS are structured to facilitate dialogue among students and teachers. They are written to allow for multiple means of communicating in that responses from students can be in different
formats. Most students, regardless of the severity of their disabilities, have a means to communicate. Communication is a priority for engaging in all other educational activities. All students should be able to express their needs and desires and relay questions and comments about themselves and their daily activities (Kleinert, Kearns, Quenemoen, & Thurlow, 2013; Malley, 2014).

To promote communicative competence so that all students and teachers are communicating with each other throughout lessons, arts teachers must know, understand, and make full use of students’ communication styles and supports. Special education teachers, along with related personnel, ensure that arts teachers know and use the communication supports implemented in all other classrooms (Malley, 2014).

**USE THE PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING**

When teachers design instruction based on a universal design for learning framework (CAST, 2011), they create an environment in which all students are likely to benefit, alleviating the need, in some cases, for individual accommodations (Fuelberth & Laird, 2014, Malley, 2014). Universal design for learning (UDL) principles were used by special educators to inform their review of the NCAS during the writing process. Hence, the language of the standards encourages representations in multiple formats and media, means of students’ actions and expressions, and ways of engaging students’ interests and motivations. Special educators and arts teachers can work together to reinforce these concepts, with arts teachers designing their classroom environments and lessons within the framework of UDL (Malley, 2014).

**KNOW HOW TO SELECT AND USE APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS**

Some students with disabilities require additional approaches and supports beyond those of UDL. Rather than lowering expectations, weakening the curriculum, or changing the standard, teachers should make use of appropriate accommodations (Malley, 2014; Thurlow, 2011; Thurlow & Quenemon, 2011). Arts educators contribute to and are informed by students’ Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in developing accommodations. Arts teachers’ contributions are essential to ensure the correct accommodations for their specific subject matters. Special educators and related personnel, working with arts teachers, are in a position to design appropriate accommodations as needed (Malley, 2014).

**MAKE USE OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES**

Special educators adopt evidence-based practices for students needing specific strategies and interventions. For example, a strategy might assist a student in maintaining his or her schedules and routine throughout the day, or an intervention might help a student self-monitor a particular behavior that inhibits learning. Teachers must fully understand and implement such practices to elicit the best outcomes for students. Special educators prepare and work with arts teachers to ensure that students are consistently receiving strategies or interventions as set forth in their IEPs (Malley, 2014).

**TARGET INSTRUCTION AND USE FORMATIVE INDICATORS OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE**

Arts teachers should be intentional in presenting materials and pay particular attention to how students respond to them within the context of UDL. The NCAS provide a framework for progression.
within standards so that teachers can scaffold instruction. Arts teachers build formative indicators into curriculum and instruction, target instruction, and adjust materials and procedures when needed. Special educators can collaborate with arts teachers to meet the particular needs of students with disabilities within the context of formative instruction and evaluation (Malley, 2014).

Collaborative Methods

Collaborative efforts among teachers delivering arts education to students with disabilities can occur across different settings and levels of involvement. Special educators serve as resources to arts educators, consulting on general and individualized approaches to working with students on their caseloads. Arts and special education teachers communicate frequently on strategies and the progress of their students, problem-solving and sharing information and ideas (Adamek & Darrow, 2010; Dorff, 2012). Another collaborative method is co-teaching in the arts curriculum, with special educators and arts educators working in tandem in the classroom. When there are several students with disabilities in the classroom, this approach can create options for all students and maximize applications of evidenced-based practices, targeted instruction, and formative evaluations (Friend & Bursuck, 2012; Malley, 2014). An arts integrative approach, with arts teachers working with special educators in areas of the academic curriculum, provides a third method of collaboration. In all cases, students can benefit from collaboration when teachers work toward common goals and share resources, problem-solving, responsibilities for key decisions, and accountability for outcomes (Friend & Bursuck, 2012).

Administrators’ Responsibilities

Teachers work within the context of the whole school environment, and administrators are essential to the success of the collaborative efforts of special educators and arts educators. The implications of the guiding principles set forth in the NCAS are that administrators will create a positive school climate of high expectations, facilitating collaboration across disciplines. They build time into teachers’ schedules for collaborative planning and support teachers’ efforts. To promote communicative competence among teachers and students, administrators should know and implement the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requirements and support special education efforts within arts education disciplines. Administrators should also know and encourage the use of UDL principles across classrooms and recognize the importance of including arts teachers on IEP teams, assuring their participation in the IEP process. Administrators also need to understand and enforce the use of evidence-based practices in arts classes, as indicated by IEPs. Lastly, administrators can advance collaborative practice by arranging professional development for teachers on such topics as UDL, evidence-based practices, and targeting instruction for students with disabilities (Billingsley, McLeskey, & Crockett, in press).

Conclusion

 Traditionally, student proficiency standards for arts educators and professional standards for special educators have provided a framework within which teachers have focused on their respective responsibilities with little overlap. Initially, proficiency standards for implementation by arts teachers were not particularly focused on approaches to including students with disabilities in their instruction. In addition, the implementation of professional standards for special educators in most states has focused on renewed pressure for students with disabilities to succeed in core academic subjects (Leko, Brownell, Sindelar, & Kiely, 2015). The passage of the ESSA (2015), however, indicating that the arts are part of a well-rounded education and that all students, including most students with disabilities, are to be held to the same educational goals and standards, provides opportunities for linking the arts and special education, as does the development
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of the NCAS, which include students with disabilities in their framework. Collaboration between arts educators and special educators can ensure the inclusion of students with disabilities in arts education so that all students can achieve a personal level of artistic literacy in preparation for adulthood. Standards in both professions support the goal of positive learning and life outcomes, establishing a promising future in arts education for students with disabilities.

Note

The author wishes to thank Marcia McCaffrey, Arts Education Consultant, New Hampshire Department of Education, and National Coalition for Core Arts Standards Leadership Team facilitator, for her review of an earlier version of this chapter.

References


