THINK CURRICULUM Theater

This document is designed to support Theater educators in aligning curricula for their courses with the New York State Theater Standards and to address student needs. Students in every Theater classroom display a range of maturity, skill, and intellectual development. Students in your classes may be either more advanced or not yet ready for the Performance Indicators listed in the Standards. The Performance Indicators illustrate a progression of skills, abilities, knowledge and socio-emotional development. They can be adapted as appropriate to your students’ needs and prior experiences.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

HOW CAN NEW ARTS STANDARDS TRANSFORM OLD CURRICULUM?

Students, as well as teachers, need to make, implement, and reflect on important theatrical decisions within the classroom.
• How will you give your students more opportunities to participate in the decision-making processes related to their own Creating, Performing, Responding, and Connecting?

The balance between the “depth” and “breadth” of the curriculum needs to be adjusted to meet the needs of students.
• What will guide your decision-making as you consider how to prioritize depth and breadth?

Curriculum design begins with identifying desired outcomes.
• How might you use a “backward” design process to translate the Standards into instructional designs that focus upon Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions?

What criteria do you apply as you select theatrical material for instructional purposes?
• How did you establish these criteria?
• How do/might you involve students in this process?
• What would happen to students’ understanding of their craft if they took over some important decisions regarding theatrical material?

There are differences in analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.
• There isn’t just one set of evaluation tools or one set of criteria; they are context-dependent.
• Whose set of criteria is being used, and why?
• How can you encourage students to determine the appropriate criteria for understanding and evaluating works of Theater?

Connections across disciplines, history, and cultures inform theatrical understanding.
• How can you help students investigate ways artistic work is influenced by societal, cultural, and historical context and, in turn, how artistic ideas shape cultures past, present, and future?
• Is there equal representation of genders among selected artists, topics and themes?

Assessment data informs instructional design.
• What types of assessments might inform your instruction and student reflection?
• How do your assessments encourage students to self-evaluate and respond to feedback from you and other professionals?
• What strategies will your students use to revise their work?
• What dispositions (attitudes, values, and beliefs) and mindsets (e.g., persistence and grit) will your students need to achieve instructional goals?

The relationship of 21st Century Skills to the new Theater standards is very strong.
• How can you emphasize those connections?
THINK

PRIORITIZE

depth over breadth.
The Theater Standards are
based on Big Ideas,
Enduring Understandings,
and Essential Questions
as an approach to curric-
ulum design. How can you
help students develop and
unfold more meaningful
and well-developed ideas
over time?

TRANSITION STEPS

REVIEW • PLAN • EXPERIMENT

1. Study the new Arts Anchor
   Standards and Theater Enduring
   Understandings.
   • Which units or lessons will
   need little to no adaptation?
   • Which units could be expanded
     with a few more activities (e.g.,
     adding a collaborative step)?
2. Think over the units and lessons
   in your curriculum.
   • Which Anchor Standards are
     fairly well represented?
   • Which Anchor Standards are
     not well represented, or missing
     altogether?
3. Are there any lessons or units
   that should be discarded?
4. Consider new units or lessons
   you may need to develop to
   meet all 11 Anchor Standards.

NEXT STEPS

ALIGN • APPLY • GROW • INTEGRATE

1. Review the Anchor Standards
   and Performance Indicators
   again, paying close attention to
   the Enduring Understandings,
   Essential Questions, and Process
   Components. These are broad
   and inclusive statements which,
   when explored via local curricu-
   lum opportunities, lead to fulfill-
   ment of the Standards.
2. For each unit you teach, choose
   developmentally appropriate
   Big Ideas/Enduring Understand-
   ings, and Essential Questions
   that can connect to the works
   students will engage with. These
   ideas and works will anchor your
   curriculum.
3. Do your units or lessons actively
   engage students in reflecting
   on Big Ideas, Enduring Under-
   standings, Essential Questions
   in the various stages of making
   Theater?
4. How can you deepen or expand
   opportunities for...
   • Formative assessment and
     metacognition?
   • Differentiated options that
     meet your objectives and give
     students creative opportunities?
   • A balance of traditional Theater
     artists and works with contem-
     porary/innovative (responsive)
     Theater work and artists?
   • Integration of Theater works
     and artists from a variety of times
     and cultures?
   • Recognizing student growth as
     well as curriculum mastery?
5. Explore and try out new or
   adapted units.
   • Practice reflection. What
     worked? What didn’t work? What
     would you change?