

Adaptable Beginning Theatre Model Curriculum: A resource for digesting the National Core Arts Standards

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Introduction

In 1994 arts subjects were declared a core subject by The Goals 2000 Educate America Act, a school-reform agenda of the Clinton and Bush administrations (Smith, 2009). However, in order to truly be considered a core subject along with mathematics, English language arts, science, etc., the arts content areas must be taught with a standards-based curriculum. (Herbert, 2004) To create a challenging and relevant art classroom that rivals the other core content areas and will benefit student achievement, teachers of the arts must provide rigorous, standards-based curriculum.

Fortunately, the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, a grouping of 10 well established, leading arts organizations from around the country, completed, in June 2014, the newest set of standards for arts education in the US: The National Core Arts Standards. Because these standards are so fresh, resources are limited, and teacher familiarity with the standards is theoretically non-existent. This new set of standards is an amazing resource, but teachers often resist change in their classrooms, and in this newest standards movement, including the Common Core State Standards rolled out in 2010, it is the teachers who must learn first (Walsh, 2014).

The purpose of this model curriculum project is to assist proficient level theatre teachers in better understanding the National Core Art Standards and how they might be used in a beginning theatre classroom. It is also meant to help these teachers to plan out beginning theatre units across the school year based entirely on the National Core Arts Standards.

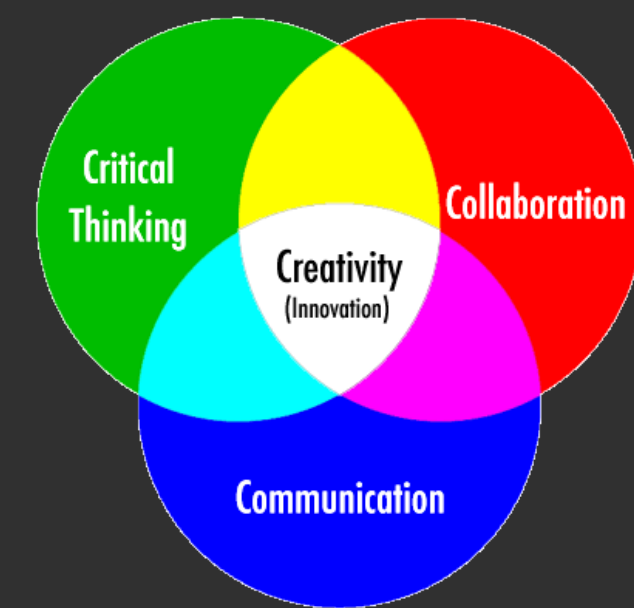


Figure 1. The 4 C's of 21st Century Education: Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Creativity. They're all organically imbedded in theatre practice.

Materials and Methods

The two main components of this project were an adaptable model curriculum word document and a document with a linear view of the new standards; both were created solely for a High School Proficient level theatre class.

The researcher used the National Core Arts Standards, released in June 2014, to craft the curriculum. Within the National Core Arts Standards include specific standards for each grade level within each content area: dance, theatre, visual art, music, and media arts. While each content area and grade level have differing standards, there are four artistic processes which guide the standards throughout: Creating, Performing, Responding, Connecting.

For this project the Theatre standards at the High School Proficient level were used. The National Coalition for the Core Arts Standards' website (nccas.wikispaces.com) and the National Core Arts Standards' website (nationalartsstandards.org) were very helpful.



Figure 2. The National Core Arts Standards logo and the abbreviations for the four artistic processes addressed in every grade level: Creating, Performing, Responding, and Connecting.

Results

When most of the educators in America are working with newly developed standards that serve a new generation of students' needs, arts educators are using twenty-year-old standards to design curriculum for their students. The National Coalition for Core Art Standards warns, "Our nation's first standards for arts education were published in 1994, and have served for nearly two decades to guide improvements in the structure, delivery, and assessment of arts education. With the increasing emphasis on core standards as drivers for our education system in areas from curriculum development to teacher assessment, we need standards that match current and future policy needs. If we don't revise standards to meet these new challenges, the arts risk being marginalized in American schools, limiting our young people's access and opportunity to a full, balanced education." (Frequently Asked Questions, 2014)

Teachers must evolve their curriculum as the educational system evolves because, our children will never be successful in this world if we use yesterday's teaching to prepare our students for tomorrow's challenges. This project was born to provide a helpful resource for those theatre teachers who wish to update their curriculum and provide a rigorous, academic arts education to their students.

Objectives of the project included: digesting the National Core Arts Standards, making connections between creative processes and their respective standards, creating an adaptable model curriculum document, sharing the document and other resources on a website. The project was successful in meeting its objectives.

◆Digesting the standards: This was possibly the most laborious step of the process. The project began in January of 2014 and the original goal was to combine the old theatre standards with the CCSS ELA standards. The new theatre standards were hard to find information on but eventually the researcher found that they would come out in June 2014. When they did the first task was to reformat them in a more linear way so that they could be read and digested one by one.

Creating

- **TH:Cr1.1**
Process Component: Envision, Conceptualize
Anchor Standard: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
Essential Question: What happens when theatre artists use their imaginations and/or learned theatre skills while engaging in creative exploration and inquiry?
 - **TH:Cr1.1.HS1**
 - A) Apply basic research to construct ideas about the visual composition of a drama/theatre work.
 - B) Explore the impact of technology on design choices in a drama/theatre work.

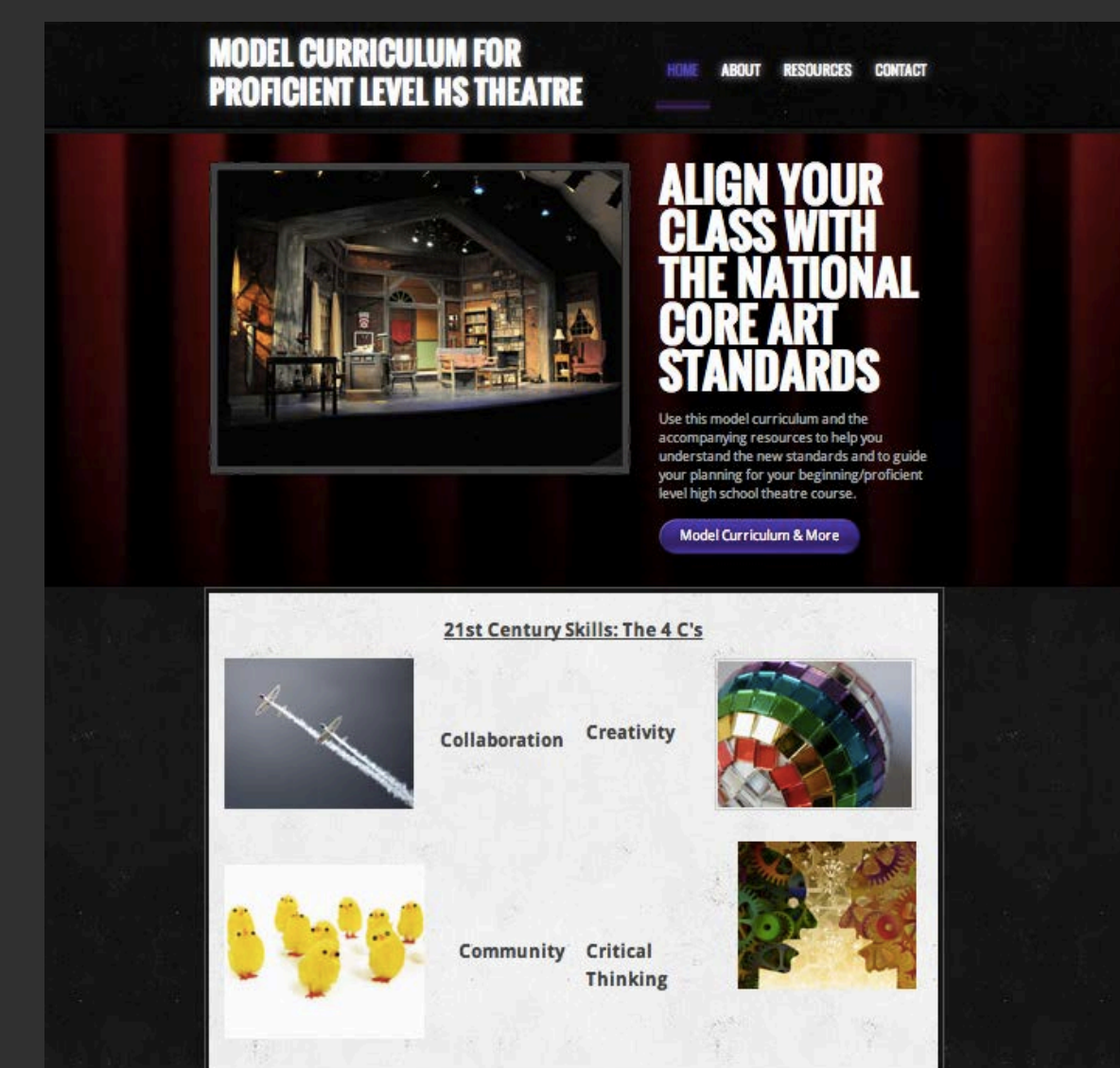
- ◆Making connections between creative processes and their respective standards: Making connections meant reading the standards in each creative process (creating, performing, responding, and connecting) and realizing how they might each be used as part of a unit.
- ◆Creating an adaptable model curriculum: Once the standards were digested and ideas for how they might be used were formulated, creating the adaptable curriculum was simply a matter of creating a table, deciding which elements to include in it, and spending a lot of time on word formatting.

UNIT NUMBER, TITLE AND HOW LONG IT SHOULD TAKE	THE	THE	THE
ARTISTIC PROCESS	ARTISTIC PROCESS	ARTISTIC PROCESS	ARTISTIC PROCESS
<p>Process Component, Anchor Standard:</p> <p>THE PROCESS COMPONENT EXPLAINS SOME SPECIFICALLY WHAT ELEMENTS OF THE ARTISTIC PROCESS LISTED ABOVE WILL BE ADDRESSED.</p> <p>THIS BOX ALSO LISTS WHICH ANCHOR STANDARD WILL BE ADDRESSED IN THE UNIT. (THESE ARE THE STANDARDS WHICH ARE THE SAME THROUGHOUT ALL GRADE LEVELS)</p>	<p>Process Component, Anchor Standard:</p> <p>THE PROCESS COMPONENT EXPLAINS SOME SPECIFICALLY WHAT ELEMENTS OF THE ARTISTIC PROCESS LISTED ABOVE WILL BE ADDRESSED.</p> <p>THIS BOX ALSO LISTS WHICH ANCHOR STANDARD WILL BE ADDRESSED IN THE UNIT. (THESE ARE THE STANDARDS WHICH ARE THE SAME THROUGHOUT ALL GRADE LEVELS)</p>	<p>Process Component, Anchor Standard:</p> <p>THE PROCESS COMPONENT EXPLAINS SOME SPECIFICALLY WHAT ELEMENTS OF THE ARTISTIC PROCESS LISTED ABOVE WILL BE ADDRESSED.</p> <p>THIS BOX ALSO LISTS WHICH ANCHOR STANDARD WILL BE ADDRESSED IN THE UNIT. (THESE ARE THE STANDARDS WHICH ARE THE SAME THROUGHOUT ALL GRADE LEVELS)</p>	<p>Process Component, Anchor Standard:</p> <p>THE PROCESS COMPONENT EXPLAINS SOME SPECIFICALLY WHAT ELEMENTS OF THE ARTISTIC PROCESS LISTED ABOVE WILL BE ADDRESSED.</p> <p>THIS BOX ALSO LISTS WHICH ANCHOR STANDARD WILL BE ADDRESSED IN THE UNIT. (THESE ARE THE STANDARDS WHICH ARE THE SAME THROUGHOUT ALL GRADE LEVELS)</p>
<p>Essential Question:</p> <p>THE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS LISTED UNDER THE ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR THIS UNIT WILL APPEAR IN THIS BOX. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE MORE THAN ONE, BUT NOT ALL ARE NECESSARY IN EACH UNIT.</p>	<p>Essential Question:</p> <p>THE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS LISTED UNDER THE ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR THIS UNIT WILL APPEAR IN THIS BOX. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE MORE THAN ONE, BUT NOT ALL ARE NECESSARY IN EACH UNIT.</p>	<p>Essential Question:</p> <p>THE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS LISTED UNDER THE ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR THIS UNIT WILL APPEAR IN THIS BOX. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE MORE THAN ONE, BUT NOT ALL ARE NECESSARY IN EACH UNIT.</p>	<p>Essential Question:</p> <p>THE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS LISTED UNDER THE ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR THIS UNIT WILL APPEAR IN THIS BOX. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE MORE THAN ONE, BUT NOT ALL ARE NECESSARY IN EACH UNIT.</p>
<p>High School Proficient Level Standards:</p> <p>THIS BOX WILL LIST THE STANDARDS THAT ARE SPECIFICALLY MEANT FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL PROFICIENT LEVEL COURSES.</p>	<p>High School Proficient Level Standards:</p> <p>THIS BOX WILL LIST THE STANDARDS THAT ARE SPECIFICALLY MEANT FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL PROFICIENT LEVEL COURSES.</p>	<p>High School Proficient Level Standards:</p> <p>THIS BOX WILL LIST THE STANDARDS THAT ARE SPECIFICALLY MEANT FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL PROFICIENT LEVEL COURSES.</p>	<p>High School Proficient Level Standards:</p> <p>THIS BOX WILL LIST THE STANDARDS THAT ARE SPECIFICALLY MEANT FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL PROFICIENT LEVEL COURSES.</p>
<p>Unit Description, Learning Outcomes:</p> <p>THIS SECTION WILL PROVIDE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WHAT THE UNIT WOULD GENERALLY INCLUDE AND WHAT THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES BASED ON THE UNIT STANDARDS MIGHT BE.</p>	<p>Unit Description, Learning Outcomes:</p> <p>THIS SECTION WILL PROVIDE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WHAT THE UNIT WOULD GENERALLY INCLUDE AND WHAT THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES BASED ON THE UNIT STANDARDS MIGHT BE.</p>	<p>Unit Description, Learning Outcomes:</p> <p>THIS SECTION WILL PROVIDE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WHAT THE UNIT WOULD GENERALLY INCLUDE AND WHAT THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES BASED ON THE UNIT STANDARDS MIGHT BE.</p>	<p>Unit Description, Learning Outcomes:</p> <p>THIS SECTION WILL PROVIDE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WHAT THE UNIT WOULD GENERALLY INCLUDE AND WHAT THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES BASED ON THE UNIT STANDARDS MIGHT BE.</p>

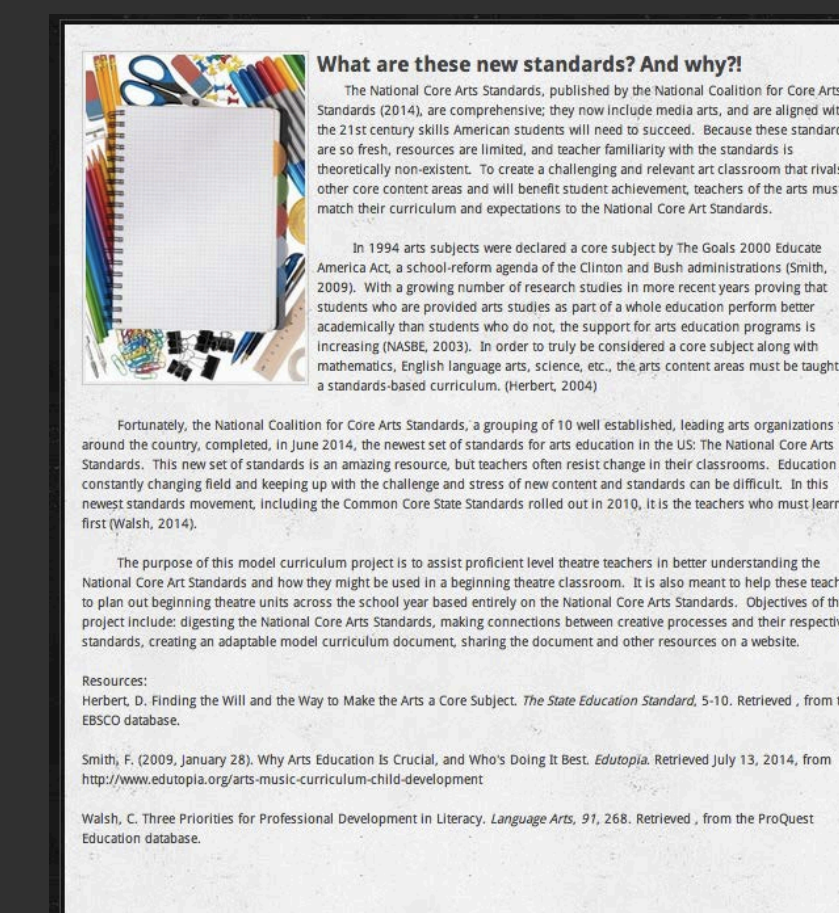
Figure 3. This is the format of the Adaptable Model Curriculum for a beginning Theatre course. It is part of the Model Curriculum document (above the filled in version), and each box of the first column explains what the reader will find in that particular section of the table.

◆Sharing the Document and other resources on a website: During development it became clear that the easiest method of sharing these documents would be to create a simple website on which to post them for downloading. Once the website was created, it was easy to add links to additional resources that were found during research for the project.

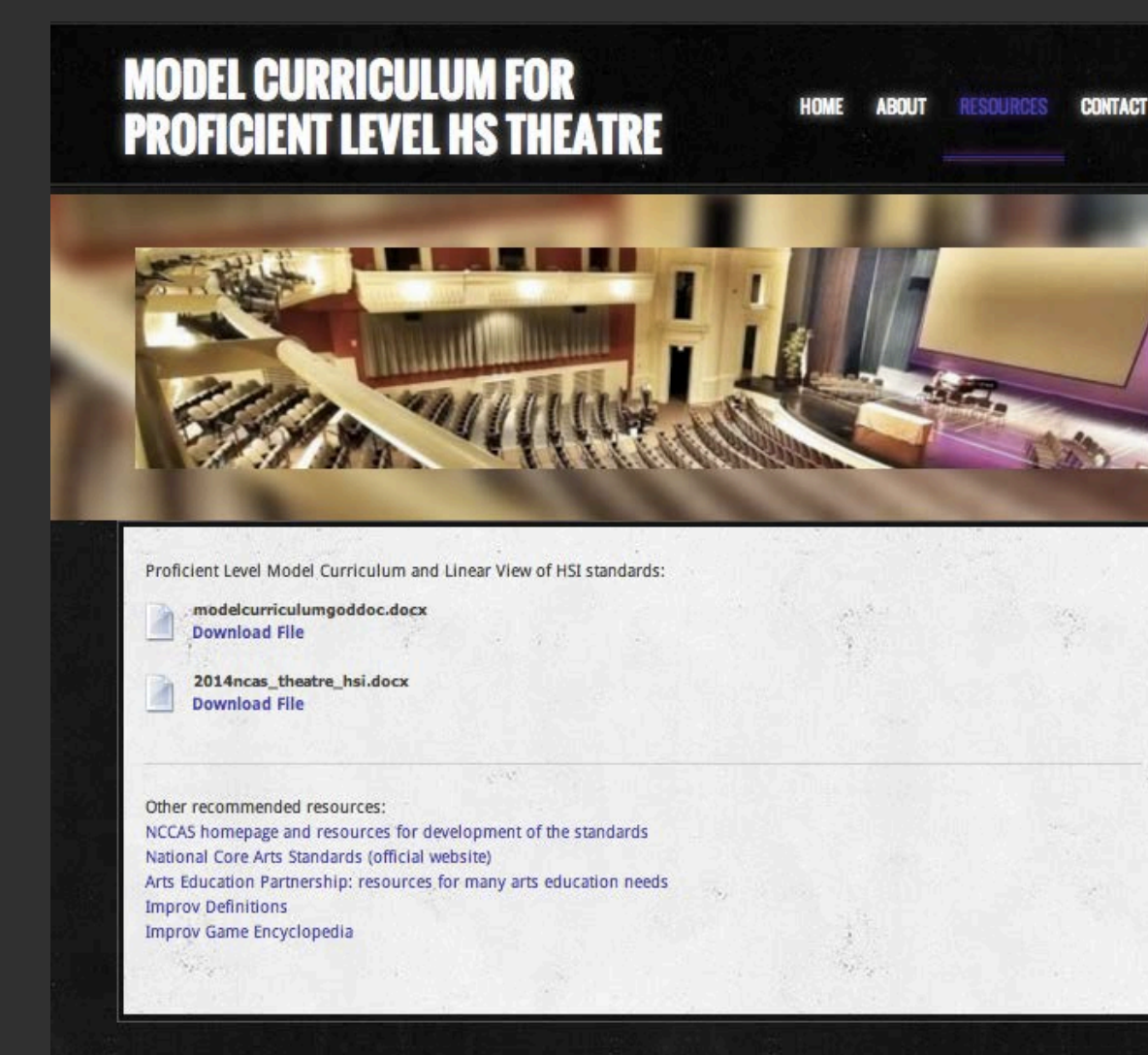
◆The website has a "Home" page which includes the downloadable document files and links to other recommended resources.



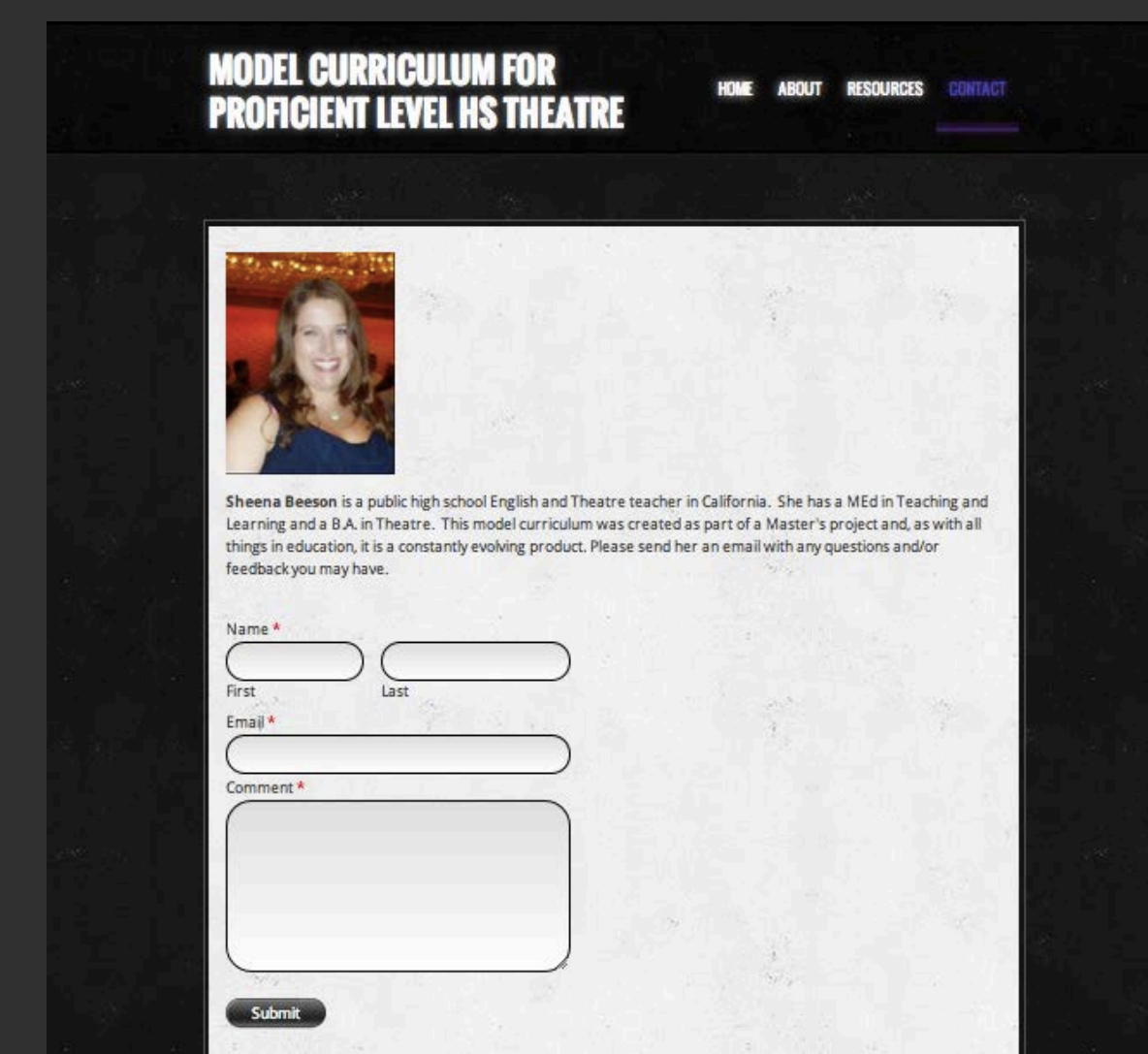
◆It has an "About" page which details the history of the new standards and the author's experience.



◆It has a resources page, from which one can download the model curriculum and linear standards documents as well as click on links to other helpful online resources.



◆And it has a "Contact Us" page which provides a short biography of the author and an email form to contact her with questions and feedback.



Conclusions

Studies have shown that students who participate in arts education find improved motivation, concentration, confidence, and teamwork (Smith, 2009). Beyond these elements, which can increase ability in all areas of a student's life, gains in math and reading scores, cognitive ability, critical thinking and verbal skills have been noted in multiple studies (Smith, 2009). Fortunately, America seems to, as a nation, be accepting arts education as a necessary part of its public education offerings. However, in order to be taken seriously in the 21st century world of education, the arts must follow the same rigorous level of standards as math and English language arts.

No Child Left Behind (1994) did list arts as one of the core subjects which could contribute to improved student learning outcomes, but the focus was on mathematics, English language arts, and science; those were the subjects being held accountable with testing (Aguilar, et. al., 2010). This has left arts education in a limbo position where they are legally recognized as essential, but on a classroom level the support is minimal.

Theatre classes and arts classes in general need that standards-based curriculum to begin to have true parity with other core content areas, but teachers must take responsibility to design this curriculum. The National Core Arts Standards are a way for theatre teachers to push toward equality amongst the core subjects; the adaptable model curriculum and accompanying website are an incredible resource to guide them in that journey.

Literature cited

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For further information

Please contact sheena.beeson@tu.edu A more detailed presentation of the project and the documents available for download may be found at <http://nationalcoreartsstandardsitheatre.weebly.com>

