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Advocates Want Art Incorporated Into Common Core

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Students perform a traditional Mexican dance at a conference on incorporating art into California's Common Core Standards.

Katie Orr, Capital Public Radio

9-year-old Lillian Sanchez bounced around a Sacramento meeting room in a long pink skirt and a ruffled white top. She and her friends were performing a traditional Mexican dance at a Sacramento conference on arts in education.

"It's just part of our culture and it's something that we learned that is something that's really fun and that a lot of kids like," she says.

While Lillian was there to dance, a group of teachers, artists and administrators were there to learn how the arts can be incorporated into the Common Core education standards California has begun using.

Joe Landon is with the California Alliance for Arts Education, an advocacy group.

"I see the arts as sort of the pathway into the spirit of the child," he says.

Landon says art can be taught separately, but also incorporated into other subjects

"And it also gives a way of learning how to do something. What discipline is and what collaboration is and what innovation is," he says. "And all these different aspects of what it is to be a human being all grow naturally out of our connection to art."

The conference was sponsored by the county superintendents' organization. The groups is creating guidelines and free online training modules for teachers on how to incorporate art into everyday lessons. The organization's Sarah Anderberg is leading the initiative. She says art can be used to help teach math, English and history.

"We see all kinds of wonderful possibilities of connecting the arts across the curriculum through discrete arts learning," she says, "but also in these powerful interdisciplinary settings."

Advocates say arts education teaches students critical thinking and discipline while developing their creative skills.