



Deer Valley Unified School District

ARTS ASSESSMENT

The definition of a balanced, comprehensive arts program as one in which the arts are studied as discrete disciplines related to each other and, when appropriate, to other subject areas in the curriculum. Students in a comprehensive program are expected to master the standards of an arts discipline, which are grouped under the following strands:

- a. Artistic perception refers to processing, analyzing, and responding to sensory information through the use of the language and skills unique to dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts.
- b. Creative expression involves creating a work, performing, and participating in the arts disciplines. Students apply processes and skills in composing, arranging, and performing a work and use a variety of means to communicate meaning and intent in their own original formal and informal works.
- c. Historical and cultural context concerns the work students do toward understanding the historical contributions and cultural dimensions of an arts discipline. Students analyze roles, functions, development in the discipline, and human diversity as it relates to that discipline. They also examine closely musicians, composers, artists, writers, actors, dancers, and choreographers as well as cultures and historical periods.
- d. Aesthetic valuing includes analyzing and critiquing works of dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts. Students apply processes and skills to productions or performances. They also critically assess and derive meaning from the work of a discipline, including their own, and from performances and original works based on the elements and principles of an arts discipline, aesthetic qualities, and human responses.
- e. Connections, relationships, and applications involve connecting and applying what is learned in one arts discipline and comparing it to learning in the other arts, other subject areas, and careers. Students develop competencies and creative skills in problem solving, communication, and time management that contribute to lifelong learning, including career skills. They also learn about careers in and related to arts disciplines.



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Regular assessment of student progress in mastering grade-level standards is essential to the success of an instructional program based on the visual and performing arts content standards and framework. It should be informative and timely and contribute appropriately to student learning and development. The three types of student assessment are described as follows:

- *Entry-level assessment.* Do students possess crucial prerequisite skills and knowledge? Do they already know some of the material being taught? If so, the teacher can more easily determine the most efficient starting point for learning. Some entry-level assessments should measure mastery of foundational standards; others should measure the degree to which students have mastered some portion of what is to be learned next. Teachers should use the information from the entry-level assessment to ensure that students receive support in specific areas. Entry-level assessments might consist of vocabulary pretests, open-ended conceptual questions, performance opportunities for students to show current mastery of theory or technique, or opportunities to demonstrate current level of skill by using a set of material or prompts.
- *Progress monitoring.* Are students progressing adequately toward achieving standards? Monitoring, which should occur regularly, helps guide instruction in the right direction. In standards-based classrooms monitoring becomes a crucial component of instruction for every student. It signals when alternative routes need to be taken or when students need to review material before moving forward. Only through such monitoring can teachers focus instruction continually so that all students are constantly progressing.

Everything students do during instruction provides opportunities for monitoring. Ongoing assessment allows student artists to reflect on their own creations, using the insights gained to enrich their own work. They need to learn how to appraise their own work and that of peers and professional artists. Therefore, monitoring, whether internal or external, should reflect the essential nature of the knowledge or skill being assessed, direct student learning, and establish expectations for achievement.

Internal monitoring (self-assessment) helps students determine their level of mastery according to a set of clear criteria. External monitoring helps teachers, also using a set of clear criteria, determine the students' level of mastery. External monitoring should (1) document performance; (2) help teachers make instructional decisions and adjustments according to documented performance; (3) identify student performance in relationship to the standards; and (4) include a variety of strategies to determine students' level of knowledge and skills.

Monitoring of progress in the arts may also be formal or informal. Formal monitoring might appear as questions or prompts to be answered by students or the performance of a prescribed set of skills on demand. Informal monitoring might include a conference or conversational



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analysis centered on a work in progress and determination of the next steps needed for completion.

- *Summative evaluation.* Have students achieved the goals defined by a given standard or group of standards? Summative evaluation helps determine whether students have achieved the goals defined in a standard or group of standards. It answers the following questions: Do students know and understand the material? Can they apply the material in another situation? Are they ready to move on? Typically, this type of assessment comes at the end of an instructional unit or school year. The most important aspect of summative evaluation is that it measures the students' long-term growth and mastery of grade-level standards.

Assessment of Performances and Exhibitions

Student performances and exhibitions can lend themselves to formal or informal assessment. Through careful planning the teacher may allow beginning performances to be shared and critiqued to help students gain mastery of the skills being developed. Such a supportive and creative environment helps students build confidence. To satisfy the entrance requirements of the University, performance course criteria should include appropriate co-curricular work, such as performances and exhibitions. Teachers should encourage students to make presentations at school board and parent meetings.

Student Portfolios

One way to assess student learning is to examine collections of students' work. Student artists should maintain portfolios of formal and informal work to monitor progress and display the depth and breadth of their skills over time, as do professional artists. Portfolios help students observe improvement in their work and assist teachers in evaluating student progress and the effectiveness of their teaching strategies. When the portfolios have been reviewed according to predetermined criteria, teachers and students can establish the levels of content mastery already achieved. Portfolios can also be used to demonstrate to parents how far students have advanced toward the goal of content mastery.

Assessment portfolios might include examples of draft sketches, technique development, and finished work as well as documentation of artwork or performances, including photographs, audios, videos, digitally formatted compilations, and reflective writings. Some types of such portfolios are as follows:



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- *Process portfolios.* These portfolios demonstrate student mastery over time. They may include rough sketches or drafts, preliminary plans for staging, scores or scripts, choreography notes and diagrams, and more refined and finished works. In addition, they may contain written reflections on works in progress, the process for completing the work, influences on the work, and critiques of self and peers. During the course teachers and students should discuss the work periodically to determine progress and areas needing improvement.
- *Portfolios of assessment tasks.* These portfolios include a series of specific tasks or assignments usually related to the mastery of a set of specific content standards in each of the strands. In task one students compare and contrast two works of portrait art; in task two they create self portraits; and in task three they use a scoring rubric to evaluate their own artwork.
- *Best-work portfolios.* These portfolios are intended to showcase the best work students have completed in a course. Usually selected jointly by students and teachers, they are typically used in formal and informal reviews of student progress.
- *Competition or high-stakes portfolios.* Portfolios of this type are developed by students for competitions, applications for advanced study, or admission to special programs. Works included should be of the highest quality and demonstrate advanced technical skills and conceptual awareness. Further, they should show evidence of accomplishment in a variety of media, including reflective statements written by the students regarding their work.

Ensemble Assessment

Ensemble products provide a different set of challenges and opportunities. The members of the band, the dancers in a troupe, the actors in a play, and the singers in a quartet all need their own clear assessment criteria because the role of the individual student, whether as a soloist or as a member of the group, is vital to the overall success of the ensemble.

Assessment Outside the Classroom

Students can venture outside the classroom to test their knowledge and skills. They can share their works in progress and completed artwork or performances away from the classroom and in doing so gain an invaluable source of new ideas. For example, schoolwide student exhibitions and performances provide a supportive first step in sharing artwork with the community. In time the scope of this sharing can widen to include the school district; the local community; the city, the county, and the state; and national festivals and competitions. But it should be noted that participation in those events is not an end in itself but an integral part of a larger learning objective.

Participation in festivals, competitions, and public exhibitions provides opportunities for the assessment of individuals and ensembles. In those educational events experienced adjudicators provide



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constructive feedback to teachers and their students and valuable insight that reinforces and extends classroom learning.

Teachers must balance opportunities to share student work and students' need for practicing their skills without having to provide entertainment at events, assemblies, meetings, clubs, and conferences. Although the visibility and popularity of student performing groups can build widespread support for arts programs, those activities should not interfere with the students' overall education.

Advanced placement (AP) courses also provide opportunities for students to challenge the depth of their understanding of the conceptual and historical arts nationally. Rankings from AP examinations can benefit a student's placement in college and chances of winning scholarships and grant entitlements. International baccalaureate programs provide a standardized program that focuses on critical thinking and exposure to a variety of points of view and is designed to encourage intercultural understanding by young people. (More information can be found online at <http://www.ibo.org>.)

Arts Assessment Nationally

In 1997 the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) developed assessment tools and items for grades four, eight, and twelve in dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts. The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), administered to eighth-grade students throughout the nation, measured students' knowledge and skills only in music, theatre, and the visual arts. Although an assessment was developed for dance, it was not administered because of the lack of a suitable national sample. The next arts assessment will be administered in 2008. Further information is available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/arts> or from the NAGB at 800 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 825, Washington, DC 20002-4233.