

A | R | T | S AT THE CORE OF LEARNING

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The Arts Assessment Challenge

What IS arts assessment? How do classroom teachers determine a student's knowledge in an art form? How do teachers know whether the arts lesson they planned was successful? How do they know when students really understand an arts process? Why is arts learning assessed? These are at least some of the questions teachers and teaching artists may address in coming months.

As a result of a new state law, schools in Oklahoma may now choose the arts assessment that is best for their students. They will make those choices given the type and amount of arts instruction and teaching resources provided. This opportunity presents a formidable challenge for those without a background or training in arts education or familiar with arts assessment. There is not a single or simple solution, but there are artists and arts organizations with expertise and training in the arts that can help.

When students experience the creative arts process, they learn new skills and knowledge that can result in learning and benefits in other areas. Self-assessment or self-monitoring of the arts process by students themselves helps reinforce and internalize their learning. Through paper and pencil tests, students respond to specific questions through multiple choice, essay or short answer responses

Assessment: a careful evaluation of what a student knows and is able to do.

Criteria: Aspects of a performance to be considered in evaluating a performance.

Evaluation: A judgement or appraisal of an activity or program.

Performance assessment: A type of assessment that requires students to apply knowledge rather than simply answer questions. It is judged against established criteria and can include open-ended questions, demonstrations, hands-on execution of experiments, simulations, videos, performances or portfolios of student work.

Portfolio: A file of student work collected over time, centered on a particular topic or content area. Specified contents are reviewed according to established criteria to determine the level of student progress.

Portfolio assessment: A type of assessment that measures change and attainment of standards in student skill over time via the products of student work and their self-reflection on their own work.

Project: A complex assignment that expects more than one type of activity and production for completion. A type of performance assessment.

Rubric: An assessment tool or a set of scoring guidelines or criteria that can be used to evaluate students' artwork, performance, portfolio or other performance task.

Sampling: A way to get information about a large group by examining only a small number of the group.

Teacher-made test: A test prepared by the teacher based on the established curriculum and instruction provided.

and may demonstrate higher level thinking skills such as analyzing, comparing and contrasting, drawing conclusions or explaining processes, styles or influences in the arts. Assessment in the arts can provide a snapshot of student learning and can help strengthen arts instruction and build stronger programs.

A brief overview of some assessment terms may be helpful for teachers developing strategies for instruction and assessment. Good web sites include: Artsedge, <http://artsedge.org/>, Lincoln Center Institute for Arts in Education http://www.lcinstitute.org/aboutlci_home.asp and the Getty www.getty.edu/education, Oklahoma State Department of Education www.sde.state.ok.us and the Oklahoma Arts Council, www.arts.state.ok.us.

New Arts Video Workshop for Teachers

The Annenberg/CPB Channel, a free satellite and broadband Channel, is offering educational programming and teacher professional development. Arts in Every Classroom is available for teachers to enroll in the workshop as it is broadcast or an 8-video set of the sessions and companion guide may be purchased.

Their web description states, "The video workshop provides new ideas about working with the arts for K-5 classroom and arts teachers. The eight one-hour video programs show workshop leaders from the Southeast Center for Education in the Arts working with Learner Teams – teachers, principals, and arts specialists – from three

elementary schools. The Learner Teams work through a curriculum unit based on a multi-arts performance piece by Cirque du Soleil. Classroom segments show school children engaged in the same lessons. Learner Team members then begin to design their own arts-based units, and return to their schools to put into practice what they learned. Web and print materials provide context and activities for using the videos in workshop sessions. Audio and video demonstration materials needed to teach the classroom lessons in Programs 1–4 can be found on the Classroom Demonstration Materials videotape, which is provided free to buyers of the set of workshop videotapes."

The workshop series is produced by the Lavine Production Group, Inc. in collaboration with KSA-Plus Communications and the Southeast Center for Education in the Arts. Titles and workshop descriptions are available and also includes "The Role of Assessment in Curriculum Design." For more information, visit the Annenberg/CPB Channel web site at: <http://www.learner.org/index.html>

"A great nation deserves great art."

Dana Gioia, Chairman
National Endowment for the Arts

A new resource is now available for high school teachers, produced by the National Endowment for the Arts in cooperation with Arts Midwest. Shakespeare in American Communities, a major initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts, is the focus of the resource developed for this national effort. A second phase,

Shakespeare for a New Generation, will provide middle and high school students in underserved communities across the United States the opportunity to see professional productions of Shakespeare plays.

NEA Chairman Dana Gioia said, "The unqualified success of the first phase of Shakespeare in American Communities has made us realize that many more communities are eager to participate in this program. With Phase II, we will bring the finest new productions of Shakespeare to hundreds of additional schools and communities."

A key feature of the initiative is a performance tour that will bring high quality, professional theater productions of Shakespeare and related educational activities to Americans throughout the country. The tour will visit 100 small and mid-size communities in all 50 states. It is the largest tour of Shakespeare in American history. Two performances by the Arkansas Repertory Theatre are already scheduled in Oklahoma - April 12 in Ada and April 13 in Weatherford.

The Teachers Guide to Shakespeare, includes a teachers' toolkit with fact sheets on the life of Shakespeare and Elizabethan theater, classroom activities, famous quotations and expressions from Shakespeare's works, a timeline poster of Shakespeare's plays and an educational video. Also, a Recitation Contest Book will feature performance evaluation forms, play and sonnet selections and an audio CD with readings by James Earl Jones and other actors. The educational program is provided FREE for use by

classroom teachers and group leaders in situations where materials can be used with new students year after year. For more information about the Shakespeare project and how to order or download the educational materials, visit National Initiatives at www.nea.gov, the NEA web site or www.shakespeareinamericancommunities.org

Download! YouthARTS Toolkit

Practical resources and best practices to help communities and organizations build successful youth programs, is made possible by Americans for the Arts. The publication, YouthARTS® Handbook: Arts Programs for Youth at Risk is now available online. The now out-of-print YouthARTS® Handbook gave schools and communities detailed information on how to plan, run, and provide training and evaluation for afterschool programs. With funding provided by the MetLife Foundation, the YouthARTS® Toolkit Online, launched in May 2003, making it possible for these valuable resources to be available beyond the life of the Handbook.

The YouthARTS web site has summary information about the toolkit, a planning model and best practice tips for program evaluation, training ideas and advocacy strategies. It also features descriptions of the programs upon which the toolkit is based. The material is easy to access and quick to read. You may download the entire toolkit at: www.AmericansForTheArts.org/YouthARTS.

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Grants available for arts education

Funding from the Oklahoma Arts Council is available to support arts experiences in public schools. **ArtsPower Education Grants** provide assistance to community arts organizations to further arts education in Oklahoma schools. Projects must involve artists, arts educators and/or others in the instruction, and active engagement in the arts. Classroom instruction in arts processes and teacher professional development are types of activities supported.

Applications for ArtsPower Education Grants are accepted from non-religious, non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) community arts organizations working in partnership with K-12 schools in Oklahoma. Projects must be planned and implemented with at least one school or school district.

The deadline is March 1, 2004 for projects beginning after July 1, 2004.

Artists-in-Residence Grants provide matching funds to schools for residencies with an Oklahoma Arts Council AIR roster artist. The AIR roster includes artists in creative writing, storytelling, dance, music, theater, traditional and visual arts.

Applications are accepted from non-religious, non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations, agencies of government, sovereign Indian nations, public libraries and public schools. Applications must be received 60 days before the start of the residency. Visit the OAC Web site at: www.arts.state.ok.us for guidelines and additional information.