

# *Arts Education: this we believe*

Written for and presented to the  
Oklahoma Arts Assessment Task Force  
March 26, 2004

Paulette Black, Arts Education Director  
Oklahoma Arts Council

## *Arts Education: this we believe*

Written for and presented to the Oklahoma Arts Assessment Task Force  
March 26, 2004

Paulette Black, Arts Education Director  
Oklahoma Arts Council

In 2003, the Oklahoma State Legislature called for the State Board of Education to convene a task force around the issue of arts assessment. The task force was to *“make recommendations on appropriate fine arts assessment strategies that are aligned with the state academic arts standards by grade level as adopted by the State Board of Education and known as the Priority Academic Student Skills and the National Standards for Arts Education. The recommendations shall be communicated to school districts for use in implementing the assessment strategies for the district. The assessment strategies selected by the school district may be in the form of grading, portfolio or performance assessment. The assessment strategies shall measure achievement levels based on the state and national academic art standards and shall be labeled as “meets standard” or “does not meet standard”.*

The new 2003 legislation, HB 1414, allows each school district to determine the structure of the assessment strategies to be administered to students in grades three through eight in the areas in which the student received instruction and are to report the results to the SDE. It was determined that the task force would work with the State Department of Education in providing technical assistance to school districts as they (1) develop pilot assessments and (2) plan their assessments and reporting mechanisms for the 2004-2005 school year.

The SDE determined that arts integration will be the method of instruction promoted and lesson plans/arts activities and assessment ideas posted electronically, will be the primary assistance offered to schools, creating an essentially automated, paperless system of technical assistance.

Discussion of instructional approaches beyond arts integration or best practice in arts assessment were not included in the work of the Assessment Task Force as outlined by the SDE.

Consequently, these other approaches to instruction and assessment, as well as feasibility, validity and reliability of specific arts assessment strategies and curriculum approaches were not discussed.

Despite the fact that the Oklahoma State Legislature placed the arts in the core curriculum in 1990 and the U.S. Congress also approved inclusion of the arts in the core curriculum, the wide-scale implementation within the state is uneven and undetermined at this time. It had been assumed by many in the arts education and arts communities, that arts education would be

embraced as a core subject, especially in light of research and evidence demonstrating the benefits of arts education to the development of all children.

Throughout the years since the arts were added to the core and to the Oklahoma Student Testing Program, teachers and school administrators admitted a struggle with a limited capacity for implementation, inadequate resources – both human and financial and the general perception that the arts were a non-essential. With the new arts assessment legislation however, there is the opportunity to reintroduce arts education and insure a broader understanding of the benefit of arts education for all students in Oklahoma.

Some members of the Task Force raised questions and concerns however, and the need to articulate fundamental beliefs about arts education became apparent. Thus, the need for this White Paper, “*Arts Education: this we believe*”. Many current national publications reflect the prevailing philosophy of arts education across the nation. Major research has demonstrated the benefits of quality arts education in our schools and resources have been directed to support these efforts both nationally and in Oklahoma.

A common purpose and common goals for arts education must be embraced by the arts and education communities to maximize the next efforts to make the arts part of the educational experience of all children. These goals should emerge out of core beliefs about arts education supported by the field and documented through various scholarly writings, best practice experiences, research and sound educational practice.

**Belief # 1: The arts are in the core curriculum by state and federal law and are mandated for all students in all schools throughout the state and must be a priority investment of public funds in Oklahoma.**

**Belief # 2: Arts education includes four distinct discipline areas, each with a separate body of knowledge and skills including: dance, drama, music and visual arts.**

**Belief # 3: Instruction and assessment in arts education must first and foremost, maintain the integrity of the art form and the creative arts process.**

**Belief # 4: Instruction in the arts should be delivered in a sequential and comprehensive manner, building on prior knowledge and linked to state and/or national curriculum standards.**

**Belief # 5: Instruction in the arts should be delivered by “highly qualified” individuals, i.e. arts specialists, knowledgeable and experienced in arts processes, cultural and historical traditions and creative learning theory.**

**Belief # 6: Arts assessment is a process that is a natural part of instruction. Portfolio and performance assessment, as well as traditional written testing are logical, researched and authentic methods of arts assessment and should include established benchmarks of proficiency.**

**Belief # 7: Assessing levels of arts proficiency is a learned skill based on knowledge of the arts discipline which requires on-going education and professional development in both the arts and assessment.**

**Belief # 8: The purposes of arts assessment must be defined and articulated by the state to each district and subsequent data collection should be interpreted and disseminated to strengthen arts instruction.**

**Belief # 9: A comprehensive and thorough arts education includes sequential arts instruction and experiences provided by a combination of arts educators, classroom teachers, community arts organizations, artists and arts providers along with field experience.**

**Belief # 10: The creative arts process, imbedded in quality arts instruction, contributes to the social, cognitive and emotional development of children and is fundamental and essential to the education of all students.**

**Recommendations to strengthen arts education:**

1. Develop a draft for a statewide strategic plan with action steps and timeline for arts education implementation.

2. Refine and disseminate the strategic plan and identify strategies for implementation through discussion with various focus groups across the state.
3. Examine and support state and national arts education research to inform best practice in arts instruction and arts assessment. Findings are crucial in both developing a strategic plan for arts education and in providing on-going technical assistance to schools.
4. Strengthen the communication network with colleges and universities and work to establish seamless arts learning K-16, including working toward more required arts education for pre-service elementary education majors.
5. Initiate and support arts education opportunities in, after and outside of schools.
6. Encourage accessing existing state and federal education funds for arts education implementation such as Title I. Consider low-performing elementary schools as a possible starting point.
7. Work to achieve an investment of public funding critical to implement a long-range plan for arts education reflective of the 10 beliefs in this paper.

## White Paper Bibliography

Barry, Nancy, Michael G. Gunzenhauser, Diane Montgomery, Michael A. Raiber, Oklahoma A+ Schools, Research Report, Year One: 2002-2003.

Boston, Carol (2002), The Concept of Formative Assessment, Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 8(9). Retrieved January 8, 2004 from <http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=8&n=9>.

Brualdi, Amy, Implementing Performance Assessment in the Classroom: Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 6 (2). Retrieved January 8, 2004 from <http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=6&n=2>.

Deasy, Dick (editor), Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development, Arts Education Partnership, 2002.

Developing an Arts Assessment: Some Selected Strategies, National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP, The Arts, retrieved, January 14, 2004.

Eisner, Elliot, The Uses and Limits of Performance Assessment, Kappan, May, 1999 Retrieved, 1/29/04, [www.pdkintl.org/kappan/keis9905.htm](http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/keis9905.htm)

Eisner, Elliot, The Kind of Schools We Need, Heinemann, 1998.

Fiske, Edward, editor, Champions of Change, Arts Education Partnership, 1999.

Greene, Maxine, Variations on a Blue Guitar: The Lincoln Center Institute Lectures on Aesthetic Education, Teachers College Press, 2001.

Herbert, Douglas, Finding the Will and the Way to Make the Arts a Core Subject, The State Education Standard, 2004.

Jensen, Eric, Arts with the Brain in Mind, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001.

Lehman, Paul, What Students Should Learn in the Arts, Content of the Curriculum, Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1995. Retrieved January 16, 2004, from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/1995glathorn/lehman>

Linn, Robert, Eva L. Baker, Joan Herman, Alternative Approaches to Measuring Adequate Yearly Progress, The CRESST Line, Newsletter of the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing, Winter 2003.

Meyer, Lori, The Complete Curriculum, Ensuring a Place for the arts and Foreign Languages in America's Schools, National Association of State Boards of Education, Winter, 2004.

Moskal, Barbara. M. (2003). Recommendations for Developing Classroom Performance Assessments and Scoring Rubrics, Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 8(14). Retrieved January 8, 2004 from <http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=8&n=14>.

National Standards for Arts Education, Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994.

No Subject Left Behind, a Guide to Arts Education Opportunities in the 2001 NCLB Act, Arts Education Partnership and others, 2004.

Rabinowitz, Stanley, Four Things to Consider About Performance Assessments, School Administrator, 2001, Retrieved January 30, 2004 from [www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2001](http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2001).

Stiggins, Richard, Assessment Crisis: The Absence of Assessment FOR Learning, Phi Delta Kappan, V. 83 No. 10, Pages 758-756, June 2002. Retrieved January 29, 2004.

Sylwester, Robert, The Role of Preference in Cognition, Curriculum and Assessment – Part I & II, August and September, 2003, Brain Connection, Retrieved March 26, 2004 from [www.brainconnection.com](http://www.brainconnection.com).

The Arts and School Reform: Lessons and Possibilities from the Annenberg Challenge Arts Projects, Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, 2003.

Winner, Ellen, and Lois Hetland, The Arts and Academic Achievement: What the Evidence Shows, Reviewing Education and the Arts Project (REAP), The Journal of Aesthetic Education, University of Illinois Press, Vol. 34, Fall/Winter, 2000.

3/31/04