

Standards-Based Curriculum to Guide Instruction

An effective and high-quality arts education program within an LEA has an articulated, TK–12 sequential, standards-based, and comprehensive curriculum for dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts. Discipline-specific curriculum provides an overarching plan for the regular school day instruction and is accessible by all district students. Each arts discipline curriculum should be shared with all LEA educators, administrators, families, and community members.

Defining 'curriculum': According to the California Department of Education, "Curriculum, or course of study, is the content and plan for instruction. It is made up of the instructional resources, methods, and assessments needed to help students develop critical skills and knowledge. Along with high-quality and effective instruction, curriculum is an essential element that enables students to learn and thrive" (2021a).

See the California Department of Education Curriculum web page (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/vp/cf/ch9.asp#link1>) for more resources.

Effective curriculum provides outlines in each of the five arts disciplines that articulates the sequence of instruction and student learning expectations for all students. The curriculum should provide general guidance on diverse student learning needs and suggestions for accommodations and modifications. It attends to the range of novice through advanced learners, provides a basis for formative and summative classroom assessment, and is grounded in the appropriate disciplinary pedagogies and methodologies.

Depending on the existing status of LEA arts education programs, the curriculum may outline a phased-in approach to curriculum implementation that addresses and provides information on how to bridge any existing learning gaps within the arts subject areas. For equitable access, arts education is implemented within the regular school day.

Teachers (individually or collaboratively) use the curriculum and the principles of UDL to design specific classroom units of instruction and assessments that give all students equal opportunities to succeed. Teachers use the curriculum to create units and lessons that are responsive to their students' cultural, learning, social, emotional, and literacy needs. The curriculum may differentiate between aspects that are taught by single-subject credentialed arts educators, general classroom teachers, special education teachers, career technical educators, or teachers of other subjects. In LEAs that include cross-disciplinary approaches, the curriculum may also provide teachers guidance for integrated instruction that includes the arts. All students benefit when their learning is connected in authentic disciplinary ways to amplify concepts and understanding, expand literacy, and hone skill development. Chapter eight, "Transcending Disciplinary Boundaries—Arts Integration," discusses these benefits, as well as approaches and models of integrated learning. While the benefits of strategic and well-crafted arts integration are known, integration should not supersede nor replace discrete arts education.

Note

Chapter 8: *Transcending Disciplinary Boundaries* provides a discussion of the benefits, approaches, and models of integrated learning.

Chapter 2: *The Instructional Cycle* provides additional discussion on curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Chapter 3: *Dance*; Chapter 4: *Media Arts*; Chapter 5: *Music*; Chapter 6: *Theatre*; and Chapter 7: *Visual Arts* provide discipline-specific curriculum guidance.

A comprehensive district view of arts learning is vital to revising curriculum, expanding arts education programs, ensuring quality instructional time, and securing necessary resources for learning. Effective district curriculum includes examples of student benchmark assessments. Establishing district benchmark assessments in each arts discipline provides a programmatic or overall view of student learning, rather than an indication of an individual student's progress. Continuously improving students' learning requires teachers to evaluate student work based on the district benchmark assessments.

There may also be an agreed-on timeline to review and revise the curriculum based on student learning outcomes. The district and school budgets should include funding to support the implementation of the curriculum across all schools.

Supplemental arts education occurring within or beyond the school day or through community relationships, such as with a museum, should be designed strategically to complement the in-school-day arts learning program. The curriculum may incorporate guidance for selecting extracurricular arts education activities to help administrators, teachers, and families select resources that supplement, connect, and extend arts learning. The curriculum can also include community resources—such as local museums, community arts programming, universities, and cultural arts opportunities that are

accessible to students—to meet the goals and vision of the district’s arts education program. Enhancements to the curriculum should be equitably and inclusively available to all the districts’ students even though they may vary or take on focuses related to a specific school. See chapter 10, “Instructional Materials,” for guidance for administrators and teachers in selecting standards-aligned instructional materials and resources to support the curriculum.