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# **Visual Arts Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools**



**Board of Education  
Commonwealth of Virginia**

**May 2020**

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**Adopted in May 2020 by the  
Board of Education**

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# Foreword

The Fine Arts Standards of Learning in this publication represent a significant development in public education in Virginia. Adopted in May 2020 by the Virginia Board of Education, these standards emphasize the importance of instruction in the fine arts—dance arts, music, theatre arts, and visual arts as part of a comprehensive education in the public schools. Knowledge and skills that students acquire through fine arts instruction include the abilities to think critically, solve problems resourcefully, communicate effectively, work collaboratively, understand historical and cultural perspectives, and exercise creative thinking by employing originality, flexibility, and imagination.

The Fine Arts Standards of Learning were developed through the efforts of classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, administrators, college faculty, professional artists, community arts organization representatives, fine arts professional organization representatives, and museum personnel. These persons assisted the Department of Education in developing and reviewing the draft documents. Opportunities for citizens to make comments with respect to the standards documents were provided through public hearings that were held at several sites across the state, as well as public comment email accounts.

The Fine Arts Standards of Learning are available online for divisions and teachers to use in developing curricula, lesson plans, instructional strategies, and assessment methods to support the standards. The standards state the minimum requirements in the fine arts, setting reasonable targets and expectations for what students need to know and be able to do in a sequential course of study. The standards set clear, concise, measurable, and rigorous expectations for students.

While the standards focus on what is most essential, schools are encouraged to go beyond the prescribed standards to enrich the curriculum to meet the needs of all students. Fine arts instruction in Virginia is responsive to and respectful of students' prior experiences, talents, interests, and cultural perspectives. Successful fine arts programs challenge students to maximize their potential and provide consistent monitoring, support and encouragement to ensure success for all. All students, including gifted students, English learners, and students with special needs, must have an opportunity to learn and meet high standards in fine arts instruction as part of a comprehensive education.

A major objective of Virginia's educational agenda is to provide the citizens of the Commonwealth with a program of public education that is among the best in the nation and that meets the needs of all students of the Commonwealth. These Fine Arts Standards of Learning exemplify the expectations established in the Profile of a Virginia Graduate and are reflective of the skills and attributes students need to excel in the 21st Century workplace.

# Introduction

The *Visual Arts Standards of Learning* identify the essential knowledge and skills required in the visual arts curriculum for each grade level or course in Virginia’s public schools. The standards outline the minimum criteria for a sequential course of study within a comprehensive visual arts education program. The standards are designed to be cumulative, progressing in complexity by grade level from kindergarten through the sequence of high school courses.

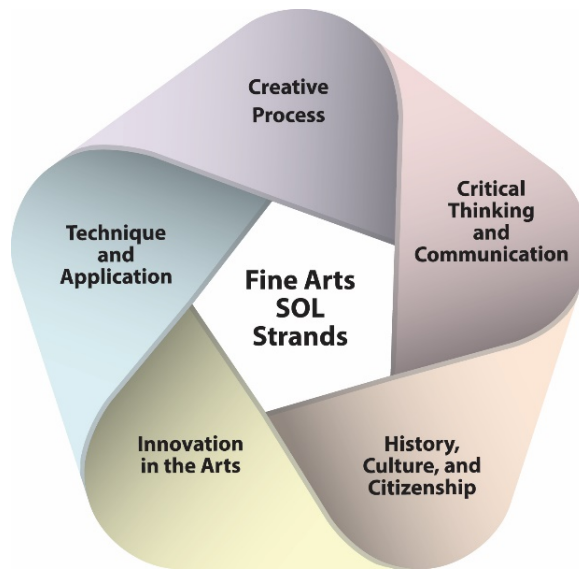
A comprehensive visual arts program provides students with opportunities to develop ideas through a creative process as well as critical thinking skills to evaluate information that is conveyed visually. Through engagement with the visual arts, students connect knowledge and skills from a variety of academic areas to solutions to problems of creation, design, and execution. They develop individual expression and the ability to work collaboratively to achieve common artistic goals, while preparing for a lifelong engagement with the arts.

The standards are not intended to encompass the entire curriculum for a given grade level or course nor to prescribe how the content should be taught. Teachers are encouraged to go beyond the standards and select instructional strategies and assessment methods appropriate for their students. Teachers are expected to consistently model appropriate use of copyrighted and royalty-protected materials.

## Goals

The *Visual Arts Standards of Learning* support the following goals for students:

- Demonstrate creative thinking by employing originality, flexibility, fluency, and imagination in the development of artwork.
- Understand and apply a creative process for developing ideas and artwork.
- Develop critical thinking skills in the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of the work of self and others.
- Articulate personal responses to artwork, and recognize the value of learning about diverse opinions and responses of others.
- Identify and apply collaboration and communication skills for artistic processes and for working within a creative community.
- Demonstrate understanding of cultural and historical influences of visual arts.
- Nurture a lifelong engagement with the arts as an integral component of communities and cultures.
- Identify and understand ethical and legal considerations for engaging with and using resources and source materials.
- Connect visual arts skills, content, and processes to career options, college opportunities, and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workplace.
- Understand and explore the impact of current and emerging technologies on visual arts.
- Cultivate authentic connections between visual arts skills, content, and processes with other fields of knowledge to develop problem-solving skills.
- Acquire the technical and artistic knowledge and skills necessary for creative, expressive, and artistic production.
- Demonstrate understanding of elements of art and principles of design and ways they are used for artistic production and creative expression.
- Select and use art media, subject matter, and symbols for creative expression and communication.
- Use materials, methods, information, and technology in a safe and healthy manner.



## Strands

The *Visual Arts Standards of Learning* are organized into five specific content strands: Creative Process; Critical Thinking and Communication; History, Culture, and Citizenship; Innovation in the Arts; and Technique and Application. Although the strands are presented separately for organizational purposes, in practice they are integrated throughout visual arts instruction, regardless of the particular learning experience. Through the understanding of visual arts concepts and acquisition of visual arts skills, the goals for visual arts education are realized.

### **Creative Process**

A creative process guides the development of ideas and original work. Creative processes include inquiry, questioning, research, investigation, generating ideas and solutions, testing solutions, discussing ideas, refining work as part of a creative community, and reflecting on the process and product. Through creative processes, students use their knowledge and skills flexibly to develop an original voice and vision as an artist.

### **Critical Thinking and Communication**

Students analyze art when they describe art works using appropriate vocabulary, classify properties of works in a variety of ways, compare and contrast aspects of art, and recognize properties and characteristics of art works. Students interpret work of self and others for messages and meaning. Evaluating the work of self and others allows students to apply content knowledge and to develop informed responses to artistic works. Students recognize and articulate personal preferences, beliefs, and opinions regarding art. Students examine their opinions, attitudes, and beliefs regarding art, and recognize the value of learning about diverse responses of others.

Collaboration and communication skills for visual arts include working toward a common goal, compromise, sharing responsibility, caring for materials and workspaces, teamwork, active listening for understanding, recognizing and effectively using verbal and nonverbal cues, presenting work and ideas, and providing and receiving constructive feedback.

## History, Culture, and Citizenship

Students explore and understand cultural and historical influences of the work of self and others. Students identify the value, roles, and reasons for creating art from the perspective of many time periods, people, and places. Students understand that visual arts are integral to communities and cultures. Students identify and interact with art as a community member and citizen, developing a lifelong engagement with art as a supporter, advocate, creator, and informed viewer. Students identify and understand ethical and legal considerations for engaging with art resources and source materials responsibly.

## Innovation in the Arts

Students understand and explore opportunities to connect visual arts content, processes, and skills to career options, college opportunities, and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workplace. Students explore and connect to careers that are likely to evolve throughout their lifetimes, which requires adaptability and flexible thinking. Students explore the impact of current and emerging technologies on visual arts processes and works, and develop problem-solving skills by cultivating connections between fields of knowledge.

## Technique and Application

Students will develop skills and techniques for multiple means of expression in visual arts. Students will explore and develop ideas and skills for a variety of media, subject matter, styles, and techniques for visual communication and creative expression.

# Safety

Safety must be given the highest priority in implementing the visual arts instructional program. Students must understand the rationale for safe practices and guidelines and must demonstrate appropriate classroom safety techniques, including the safe use of materials, equipment, tools, and art spaces while working individually and in groups. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that students know why some materials and practices are unsafe.

Correct and safe techniques, as well as the wise selection of resources, materials, and equipment appropriate for the students' age levels, must be carefully considered with regard to the safety precautions needed for every instructional activity. Safe visual arts classrooms require thorough planning, careful managing, and constant monitoring during art-making activities. Class enrollment should not exceed the designated capacity of the room.

Teachers must be knowledgeable of the properties, use, storage, and proper disposal of all products that may be judged as hazardous prior to their use in an instructional activity. Such information is referenced through Materials Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). Art materials containing toxic substances that can cause acute or chronic health effects are prohibited from use with students in pre-kindergarten through grade six, or up to twelve years of age. All hazardous art materials are required to have been tested by the manufacturer and to exhibit the safety labeling "Conforms to ASTM D-4236," "Conforms to ASTM Practice D-4236," or "Conforms to the health requirements of ASTM D-4236."

Toxic materials can enter the body in three different ways: inhalation, ingestion, or absorption through the skin. If toxic material does enter a child's body, it can result in an allergic reaction, acute illness, chronic illness, cancer, or death. Toxic materials can be more harmful to children than to adults for several reasons. Since children are smaller than adults, any given amount of a toxic material in a child's body is more concentrated than in an adult's body. Since children are still growing and developing, their bodies

more readily absorb toxic materials, which can result in more damage than in adults. Children are also at higher risk because of their behavior: they may not understand why it is important to be careful when using harmful materials, and, for example, they may put things in their mouths or swallow them without regard for the consequences.

While no comprehensive list exists to cover all situations, the following guidelines from The Center for Safety in the Arts should be followed to avoid potential safety problems:

1. Avoid certain art supplies for students in pre-kindergarten through grade six, or up to twelve years of age. The general rules are as follows:
  - No dust or powders;
  - No chemical solvents or solvent-containing products;
  - No aerosol sprays, air brush paints, or other propellants;
  - No acids, alkalis, bleaches, or other corrosive chemicals;
  - No donated or found materials, unless ingredients are known;
  - No old materials, as they may be more toxic and have inadequate labeling; and
  - No lead, metals, or cadmium products, as found in paints, glazes, metal work, and stained glass.When feasible, substitution of nontoxic materials for hazardous materials should be made a priority with students over twelve years of age.
2. High-risk students, who are at greater than usual risk from toxic materials, must be treated with special care and attention when using potentially harmful art supplies. High-risk students include those who have visual or hearing problems, physical disabilities, or asthma; take medication; or are emotionally disturbed.
3. Make sure products are adequately labeled. Do not use any product that does not have a label or has a label that gives inadequate information. In general, the more the label describes the product, the easier it will be to use safely. The label should state how the product is to be used. It should also state what to do in case of an accident. Even if the label says “nontoxic,” do not assume that the product is completely safe. Art materials must contain one of the three ASTM D-4236 labels listed above for assurance that they are safe to use. If containers are changed, be sure to label the new container.
4. Purchase hazardous products in small containers, because the smaller the amount of a product, the less potential there is for exposure to it. Also, larger amounts often are not quickly depleted, and leftover products need to be properly stored. Accidental poisonings may occur when stored products are left unattended. If such an accident should occur, call the local poison control center immediately.

Art educators are responsible for the art materials they order and supply to students and for the safe use, storage, and disposal of those materials. Numerous safe art materials are available for use in place of materials identified as being toxic. Only art materials manufactured and labeled for use in the production of art projects and activities should be used in the execution of art projects within the classroom.

## **Exhibiting Student Art**

The exhibition process encompasses many skills, concepts, and abilities that reflect aesthetic, critical, contextual, and technical decisions that directly complement the comprehensive visual arts education curriculum. Students at all grade levels should have opportunities to exhibit their works of art throughout their course of study in different contexts and venues and for various purposes. Exhibiting their art is particularly beneficial to students when they engage in the process. An exhibition process could include theme development, developing selection criteria, exhibition design, installation, publicity, and reflection.



## Grade Two Visual Arts

The standards for Grade Two Visual Arts focus on applying a creative process for artmaking. Students focus on the creative thinking skills, collaboration skills, and communication skills learned by developing ideas and artwork. Students express ideas using an increasing variety of art materials, skills, techniques, and processes. They explore and identify historical and cultural influences of artwork.

### Creative Process

- 2.1 The student will apply creative thinking to artmaking.
  - a) Incorporate unanticipated results of artmaking into works of art.
  - b) Depict imaginary characters, scenes, or experiences.
- 2.2 The student will apply a creative process for artmaking.
  - a) Generate a variety of solutions to artmaking challenges.
  - b) Reflect on the process and outcome of an artmaking experience.

### Critical Thinking and Communication

- 2.3 The student will analyze and interpret artwork using art vocabulary.
  - a) Categorize works of art both real and imaginary, by subject matter, such as portrait, landscape, still life, and architecture.
  - b) Interpret ideas, opinions, and emotions expressed in personal and others' works of art.
- 2.4 The student will express opinions with supporting statements regarding works of art.
- 2.5 The student will describe skills needed to work collaboratively in an art community.
  - a) Active listening for understanding.
  - b) Share and take turns with art tools and materials.

### History, Culture, and Citizenship

- 2.6 The student will explore and identify cultural and historical influences of art.
  - a) Identify symbols and motifs from various cultures.
  - b) Identify public art, both historical and contemporary, and its impact on the community.
  - c) Explain ways that the art of a culture reflects its people's attitudes, beliefs, and experiences.
- 2.7 The student will describe roles of artwork and artists in communities.
- 2.8 The student will identify appropriate sources for viewing art on the Internet.

### Innovation in the Arts

- 2.9 The student will recognize careers related to the art media used in instruction.

- 2.10 The student will explore contemporary digital tools for artmaking.
- 2.11 The student will apply connections between the arts by incorporating or responding to music, theatre, or dance in the creation of a work of art.

### **Technique and Application**

- 2.12 The student will identify and use the following in works of art:
- a) Color—warm, cool, neutral.
  - b) Form—three-dimensional.
  - c) Line—vertical, horizontal, diagonal.
  - d) Shape—geometric, organic.
  - e) Pattern—complex alternating and repeating.
- 2.13 The student will identify and apply spatial relationships and perspective for composition.
- a) Use foreground and background in works of art.
  - b) Depict objects according to size and proportion within works of art.
- 2.14 The student will create preliminary drawings and/or finished works of art from observation.
- 2.15 The student will refine motor skills (e.g., cutting, modeling, molding, tearing, weaving) to create two-dimensional and three-dimensional works of art.
- 2.16 The student will create three-dimensional works of art, using a variety of materials to include clay.
- 2.17 The student will create works of art inspired by a variety of concepts, themes, and/or literary sources.