



Ceramics I Curriculum

Board Approved: 02/19/2026

Course Information

**High School
Semester course**

Prerequisite(s): Introduction to Art

Course Description:

Ceramics I is an introductory studio course in which students explore hand-building techniques, surface design, and fundamental ceramic processes. Through narrative and functional projects, students investigate how form, texture, and imagery communicate meaning across cultures and time. Emphasis is placed on sketchbook planning, craftsmanship, creative problem-solving, and reflective critique. Students will create both functional and expressive works while building foundational skills that prepare them for advanced ceramic study.

Transfer Goals:

- Develop foundational ceramic skills in forming, constructing, and finishing clay works.
- Use sketchbooks to generate, plan, and reflect on ideas.
- Create ceramic works that communicate narrative or functional purpose.
- Apply introductory critique skills to reflect on personal and peer artwork.
- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- Refine and complete artistic work.
- Analyze, interpret, and select artistic work for presentation.
- Develop and refine artistic work for presentation.
- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.
- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
- Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

Curriculum Standards: [Missouri Learning Standards Fine Arts Visual Arts Standards](#)

Curriculum Resource(s): *Experience Clay*, by Maureen Mackey. Davis Publications. Additional Resources TBD

priority standards indicated in **bold*

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Unit 1: Narrative

Timeframe: 8 weeks

Unit Description: In this unit, students will explore the connection between storytelling and ceramic art (narrative ceramics), discovering how artists across cultures throughout history have used clay to narrate myths, document history, and share personal experiences. Through hand-building and surface design techniques, students will create ceramic works that communicate a chosen narrative theme while learning or recalling basic handbuilding skills of slab, coil, and pinch. Emphasis will be placed on how visual choices such as shape, texture, color, and iconography can evoke emotion, illustrate a sequence of events, or suggest deeper. Students will engage in sketchbook planning, research on cultural and contemporary narrative ceramics, and technical skill-building in forming and decorating their clay pieces.

Enduring Understandings:

- Artists can use ceramic forms and surfaces as powerful storytelling tools, communicating ideas, emotions, and experiences without relying on written or spoken language.
- Symbols, motifs, and imagery in clay can carry layered meaning, allowing artists to represent memories, cultural ideas, or significant events in ways that viewers can interpret and connect with.
- Ceramics have historically served as a record of human experience to preserve myths, document daily life, and express communal beliefs and traditions.
- The choices artists make directly shape the narrative their artwork conveys, influencing how viewers understand or feel about the story being told.
- Visual storytelling becomes compelling when the elements of design work together purposefully, guiding the viewer's attention, evoking emotion, and suggesting deeper meaning beyond the literal object.
- Planning, research, and sketching help artists clarify the story they want to tell, supporting meaningful decision-making as they develop a narrative concept into a finished work.
- Artists and designers experiment with forms, structures, materials, concepts, media, and art-making approaches.
- People gain insights into meanings of artworks by engaging in the process of art criticism
- People evaluate art based on various criteria.

Essential Questions:

- In what ways can a ceramic object communicate a story or message without relying on words?
- How can artists use symbols, motifs, or imagery in clay to represent emotions, memories, or significant events?
- How have people across cultures and time periods used ceramics to record, preserve, and share their stories, histories, and traditions?
- How can artists use clay to express a personal experience, belief, or idea in a visual form?
- What qualities make a visual story compelling or meaningful to an audience?
- How do form, texture, and surface treatment influence the story a ceramic artwork can convey?
- How can abstract or nonliteral ceramic forms communicate ideas, emotions, or narratives effectively?
- How do foundational ceramic techniques help artists communicate meaning?

priority standards indicated in **bold*

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through art-making, people make meaning by investigating and developing awareness of perceptions, knowledge, and experiences. 	
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Unit 1 Standards	
STANDARD CODE	STUDENTS WILL KNOW, BE ABLE TO, AND UNDERSTAND:
VA:Cr1B.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can take notes about ceramics practices (both traditional and contemporary) in my sketchbook. I can use a sketchbook to record different ceramic techniques and methods for surface decoration. I can use a sketchbook to brainstorm, thumbnail sketch, and plan the construction of my ceramic piece.
VA:Cr2A.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can experiment with different ceramic techniques. I can show improvement of my ceramic skills by creating a ceramic piece using different techniques. I can independently problem solve and find solutions to a problem. I can work through challenges as they arrive.
VA:Cr2B.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can use my own sources to create original artwork. I can use visual references without copying when designing, creating and displaying my artwork
VA:Cr2C.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can create a list of contemporary issues and select one that is meaningful to create my artwork. I can change the way an object, system, place, or design looks or functions in reaction to a contemporary issue.
VA:Pr4A.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can show improvement of my ceramic skills over time. I can identify characteristics of specific images and select images to show evidence of the artistic process in my portfolio. I can take photographs of artwork using good technique. I can evaluate my work using good vocabulary and my knowledge of technique and process.
VA:Pr5A.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can consider location, media materials, audience and purpose when creating artwork for display. I can figure out the best way to display my artwork. I can figure out the best way to display my artwork in my portfolio.
VA:Pr6A.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can show connections and provide visual evidence between artists or artwork and their social, cultural, and political contexts in my writing I can participate in discussions with my peers about artwork, making, explaining, and justifying connections between artists or artwork and their social, cultural, and political history I can write an artist's statement that explains the connections in my personal artwork.

**priority standards indicated in bold*

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VA:Re7A.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can create art based on my feelings or feelings of others and about the world. ● I can describe how artwork makes people feel and how they could relate to it.
VA:Re7B.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can describe the formal qualities of a work of art. ● I can evaluate a work of art to communicate what I know about its formal qualities. ● I can explain visual qualities in an artwork and how it contributes to the meaning of the artwork. ● I can evaluate and share the effectiveness of an artwork in an artist's statement.
VA:Re8A.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can identify, when, where, and how a work of art is made. ● I can research an artist and their work connected to our unit. ● I can create art that connects to my personal experiences.
VA:Re9A.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can highlight both the strengths and areas of improvement of my peers to offer constructive feedback. ● I can develop criteria to evaluate what makes a good sculpture. ● I can self-reflect using relevant criteria to evaluate my work.
VA:Cn10A.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can develop work that contains personally meaningful content. ● I can identify and choose subject matter that is unfamiliar to me. ● I can experiment with subject matter. ● I can determine when I need to use observation, research, and/or reference images to create a ceramic piece. ● I can make a ceramic piece using observation, research, and reference photos. ● I can use different ceramic processes to develop my artistic voice.

priority standards indicated in **bold*

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Unit 2: Form & Function

Timeframe: 8 weeks

Unit Description: In this unit, students will investigate the relationship between form and function. Students will learn how ceramic artists balance aesthetics and utility, and how intentional design choices can enhance or challenge an object’s functionality. Students will develop their ideas through sketchbook planning, focusing on both visual design and purpose. Emphasis will be placed on craftsmanship, thoughtful construction, surface design, and creative problem-solving. Students will explore hand-building methods (such as slab, coil, and pinch) and consider how form and surface work together to communicate meaning or enhance usability.

Enduring Understandings:

- The intended purpose of a ceramic object influences every design decision, including form, structure, materials, and construction methods.
- Ceramic objects can operate simultaneously as functional tools and expressive artworks, and artists often blend utility and aesthetics to communicate ideas.
- Thoughtful planning and craftsmanship are essential for creating ceramic works that are both visually compelling and structurally successful.
- Form, surface, and structure work together to shape an object’s usability and meaning, and artists can emphasize or disrupt these relationships intentionally.
- Function is not fixed; artists can question, reinterpret, or reinvent traditional functional forms to challenge expectations and explore new creative possibilities.
- A successful ceramic form balances visual impact, practical usability, and structural integrity, demonstrating a harmony between design intention and technical skill.
- Cultural traditions, lived experiences, and daily needs shape the evolution of ceramic forms and functions, influencing how communities design and use objects over time.

Essential Questions:

- How does the intended purpose of a ceramic object shape the choices an artist makes in its design and construction?
- In what ways can a ceramic piece function as both a practical object and an expressive artwork?
- What kinds of decisions must artists consider to ensure that a ceramic piece is both purposeful and thoughtfully designed?
- How do form, surface, and structure work together to enhance—or intentionally disrupt—an object’s function?
- How can ceramic artists reimagine, challenge, or question traditional ideas about function through creative design?
- What makes a ceramic form successful in terms of visual impact, structural integrity, and practical usability?
- How do cultural traditions, lived experiences, and everyday needs influence the forms and functions of ceramic objects across time and place?

Unit 2 Standards

STANDARD CODE	STUDENTS WILL KNOW, BE ABLE TO, AND UNDERSTAND:
VA:Cr1A.1la	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can develop new artistic questions based on my previous work or ideas. • I can collaborate with others to discuss my artwork (to work out solutions to problems, brainstorm ideas, etc.). • I can revise & transform work to solve issues.

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VA:Cr1B.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can take notes about ceramics practices (both traditional and contemporary) in my sketchbook. ● I can use a sketchbook to record different ceramic techniques and methods for surface decoration. ● I can use a sketchbook to brainstorm, thumbnail sketch, and plan the construction of my ceramic piece.
VA:Cr2A.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can experiment with different ceramic techniques. ● I can show improvement of my ceramic skills by creating a ceramic piece using different techniques. ● I can independently problem solve and find solutions to a problem. ● I can work through challenges as they arrive.
VA:Cr3A.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can use my own sources to create original artwork ● I can use visual references without copying when designing, creating and displaying my artwork
VA:Pr4A.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can show improvement of my ceramics skills over time. ● I can identify characteristics of specific images and select images to show evidence of the artistic process in my portfolio. ● I can take photographs of artwork using good technique. ● I can evaluate my work using good vocabulary and my knowledge of technique and process.
VA:Pr5A.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can consider location, media materials, audience and purpose when creating artwork for display. ● I can figure out the best way to display my artwork. ● I can figure out the best way to display my artwork in my portfolio.
VA:Re7B.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can describe the formal qualities of a work of art. ● I can evaluate a work of art to communicate what I know about its formal qualities. ● I can explain visual qualities in an artwork and how it contributes to the meaning of the artwork. ● I can evaluate and share the effectiveness of an artwork in an artist's statement.
VA:Re8A.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can identify, when, where, and how a work of art is made. ● I can research an artist and their work connected to our unit. ● I can create art that connects to my personal experiences.
VA:Cn10A.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can develop work that contains personally meaningful content. ● I can identify and choose subject matter that is unfamiliar to me. ● I can experiment with subject matter. ● I can determine when I need to use observation, research, and/or reference images to create a ceramic piece. ● I can make a ceramic piece using observation, research, and reference photos. ● I can use different ceramic processes to develop my artistic voice.
VA:Cn11A.IIa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can compare and contrast the reasons, methods, and intended audiences for art created in the past and present. ● I can examine and explain how artwork connects to different contexts.

priority standards indicated in **bold*

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can explore modern issues to inspire my artwork. |
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Unit 3: Final Portfolio

Timeframe: 1-2 weeks

Unit Description: In this culminating unit, students will reflect on their growth over the course of the semester. They will revisit key projects, sketchbook work, and skill-building experiences to evaluate their progress in both technical skill and creative expression. Using this reflection, students will thoughtfully curate a final portfolio that showcases their strongest work, demonstrates their understanding of ceramic processes, and communicates their artistic voice.

Enduring Understandings:

- Artistic growth is an ongoing process; by reflecting on past work and experiences, artists can recognize how their skills, ideas, and creative approaches evolve over time.
- Strong artistic portfolios are intentionally curated, using clear criteria to select work that best represents an artist's development, strengths, and unique voice.
- The way artwork is presented—visually, verbally, and in writing—shapes how audiences understand the artist's identity, intentions, and message.
- Challenges and problem-solving experiences are central to artistic learning, and acknowledging them helps artists understand how technical and creative abilities develop.
- Finished ceramic pieces reveal an artist's understanding of materials, processes, and craftsmanship, as well as the expressive choices that support meaning and intention.
- Reflective practice deepens artistic self-awareness, helping artists make connections between past experiences and future goals.
- Artists grow by analyzing their own work with honesty and clarity, using reflection to guide continued improvement in technique, creativity, and self-expression.

Essential Questions:

- How can I recognize and articulate the ways my skills, ideas, and artistic approaches have evolved throughout the semester?
- What criteria can help me determine which ceramic works best represent my artistic growth and voice?
- In what ways does the selection and presentation of artwork communicate who I am as an artist?
- How do the challenges I encountered—and the ways I addressed them—shape my development in both technique and creativity?
- How do my completed pieces demonstrate my understanding of ceramic processes, craftsmanship, and expressive intent?
- How can I thoughtfully communicate about my artwork—visually, verbally, and in writing—to convey meaning and purpose?
- How can reflecting on my experiences this semester help me set meaningful goals for my future growth as an artist?

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<u>VA:Cr2A.IIa</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can experiment with different ceramic techniques. ● I can show improvement of my ceramic skills by creating a ceramic piece using different techniques. ● I can independently problem solve and find solutions to a problem. ● I can work through challenges as they arrive.
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