

Key words

Following are definitions for words in the handbook that may be unfamiliar or may have different meanings in other contexts.

aesthetic response: The reaction of a viewer/listener whose emotions are engaged by an artwork, through the meaning, mood, and/or beauty of the work.

arrange (when referring to music): Make choices about how a piece will be played.

assess: Evaluate; judge the value of something.

compose (when referring to music): Create a musical work.

choreograph: Create a dance.

choreography: The art of creating a dance, or the structure of a specific dance.

criteria: The expected levels of quality for the elements of a work. For example, criteria for judging a work of visual art could include balance, unity, and the effective use of color.

critic: A person who judges works of art according to criteria.

critique: *noun:* A critical review of a work. *verb:* To review or analyze critically.

form: The defined structure of a work—for example, a song in the “verse/chorus form.”

genre: A type or category within an arts area—for example, “farce” in theatre, “jazz” in music and dance, or “seascape” in visual art.

improvise: Create something on the spot, sometimes during a performance.

medium: The materials used to create an artwork, such as “oil on canvas.” (Plural form: *media*.)

mixed media: A single work in more than one medium, such as clay and fiber, or paint and papier-mâché.

style: The distinctive way that an artist expresses himself or herself, such as “Billie Holiday’s vocal style,” or a characteristic manner of expression, such as “in the style of Japanese anime.”

technology: Tools, machines, or equipment used to produce works—for example, a computer, a loom.

Introduction

What should my child be learning?

A kindergarten student picks up a mallet and strikes bars on a xylophone at random. Eight years later, the same student composes a piece for steel drums, to be performed at the school’s spring concert. What has happened in between?

In Pennsylvania, instruction in the arts (and other subjects) is guided by standards—goals and expectations for students—which were adopted by the state legislature in 2002. This handbook, which is based on the Pennsylvania Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities and other sources, outlines expectations for kindergarten through eighth grade in the four areas of the arts: dance, music, theatre, and visual arts. (*Note:* Used here, the words “art” and “artist” refer to all arts areas.)

The standards are organized into four categories, including:

- **Production, Performance, Exhibition.** Dancing, acting and directing, making music, and creating visual art are central to students’ learning in the arts. Students come to understand how artists work, and the place of the arts in human history and society, through their own creative experiences.
- **The Arts in the Context of History and Culture.** Students learn that artists create works in specific places, during certain time periods, from within par-

ticular cultures, all of which influence what they do.

- **Critical Response.** Students learn about and engage in the process of art criticism—analyzing, comparing, interpreting, and evaluating as they respond to artworks.
- **Aesthetic Response.** Students learn to recognize and respond to meaning, beauty, and emotion in artworks, enhancing their own appreciation and helping them to understand the role of the arts in society.

While categorizing the standards helps to define them, it is important to note that students’ learning experiences are not separated in this way. For example, a student who is learning about Vincent Van Gogh may also be forming ideas for a landscape she’s working on, or thinking of writing a poem about the painter’s curly clouds. Another student, while trying out voices for a character he’s going to portray on stage, may remember an actor he admires, wonder what made the actor so effective in a particular film, and decide to look online for a review.

Please also note that the grade level organization is only a guide. Children in the same class learn at different rates, and each child will likely progress faster in one arts area than in others.

Along with the standards and samples of student work for each grade level, the handbook includes a section on arts assessment (how teachers grade the arts) on page 25.

Why study the arts?

The arts have their own languages. Like any other subject area, they give students ways of knowing and communicating that have value in and of themselves.

Research has shown that the arts also help students succeed in other ways. For example, the arts can provide the “glue” to help students make connections while they’re learning. Kindergarten students may recognize the shapes of letters through dance, or act out a story to find its meaning. Older students may grasp mathematical concepts such as ratio and proportion through musical training in rhythm and note patterns. In science class, drawing helps students understand living things and natural



Introduction

What are quality arts experiences?

Quality arts experiences offer students opportunities to:

- Explore materials and make choices
- Solve creative problems and revise their work
- View others' artwork, listen to others' compositions, and form opinions
- Reflect on their own creative process ("How did I get here? What did I learn?")
- Participate in critiques of their own work and others' work
- Develop skills of observation and listening
- Collaborate productively with classmates
- Perform or exhibit their work for audiences

occurrences. All arts areas can be entry points for learning about particular cultures or historical periods.

The arts have the power to engage and motivate students, whether they are struggling low achievers or bored high achievers, because they involve personal experience. When there is no "right answer," all students can excel. Meanwhile, learning in and through the arts prepares students for the workplace by developing skills and abilities that today's employers are seeking, such as creative thinking and collaboration.

The arts lend themselves to high-quality learning experiences. Consider what students do when they are challenged to create an original painting, musical piece, dramatic character, or dance. In the beginning, they struggle with their ideas and the materials. As they continue, they judge their work against their own

developing standards for what is "good." They take risks, make changes, evaluate the results, and decide when the work is finished. Finally, they have a product that can be communicated to others through an exhibit or performance. These are the kinds of learning experiences students are likely to remember and value for the rest of their lives.

For all these reasons, students who spend more time engaged in arts education are more likely to achieve in other subjects, especially reading and math. (For links to specific studies, visit the Web site of the Arts Education Collaborative: www.artsedcollaborative.org.)

Note: Arts programs vary from school to school. Even though the Pennsylvania standards encompass all arts areas, your child's school may not offer all four.

This handbook attempts to outline a comprehensive arts program.

Talking to children about art

When parents ask questions that require more than a "yes/no" answer, and make comments that describe without judging, children are more likely to engage in conversations about art. Following are suggested questions and comments.

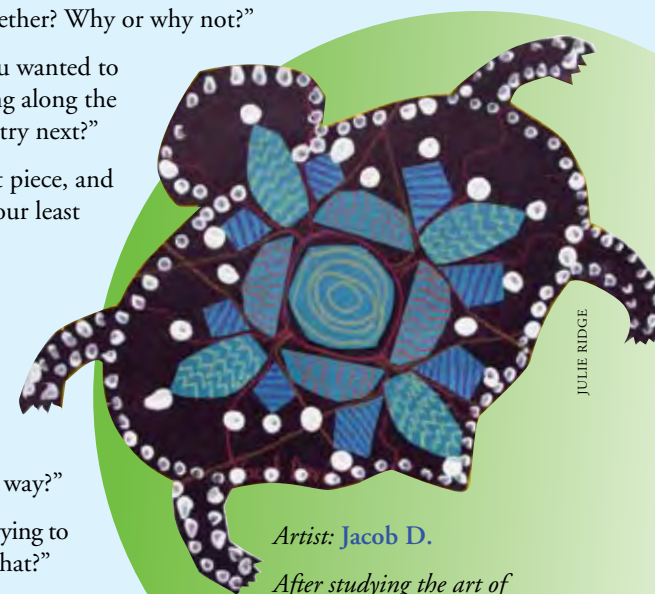
About your child's work:

- "Tell me about this piece. Is there a story that goes with it, or something that inspired you?" "What were you thinking about or feeling when you made it?"
- Describe or acknowledge something that stands out for you. "You had a lot of different kinds of dance movements." "There's quite a contrast between the two characters." "I notice that you used a lot of blue." "It was surprising when you changed from a major key to a minor key."
- "Do all the parts seem to go together? Why or why not?"
- "Did you try everything that you wanted to try?" "Did you change something along the way?" "What would you like to try next?"
- "What do you think is your best piece, and why? How is it different from your least successful piece?"

About others' work:

- "How did that artist get your attention?"
- "How does that work make you feel?" "Is there one particular part that makes you feel that way?"
- "What do you think the artist is trying to say?" "How did he or she show that?"

Parents are responsible for monitoring their children's achievement in the arts just as they monitor their children's progress in other subject areas. For more information about your child's work, ask for his or her portfolio, sketchbook, audiotapes/CDs, videotapes/DVDs, journals, practice logs, artist's statements, written reflections, and/or completed tests/assessments. At an "open house," be sure to visit arts classrooms and ask teachers about their goals for the year. Most teachers will welcome your interest in your child's program.



JULIE RIDGE

Artist: **Jacob D.**

After studying the art of Australian Aborigines, second graders created sea turtles using Aboriginal painting techniques.