

Connecting, Creating, Presenting, and Responding in Arts Education

Arts Education Curriculum 2016

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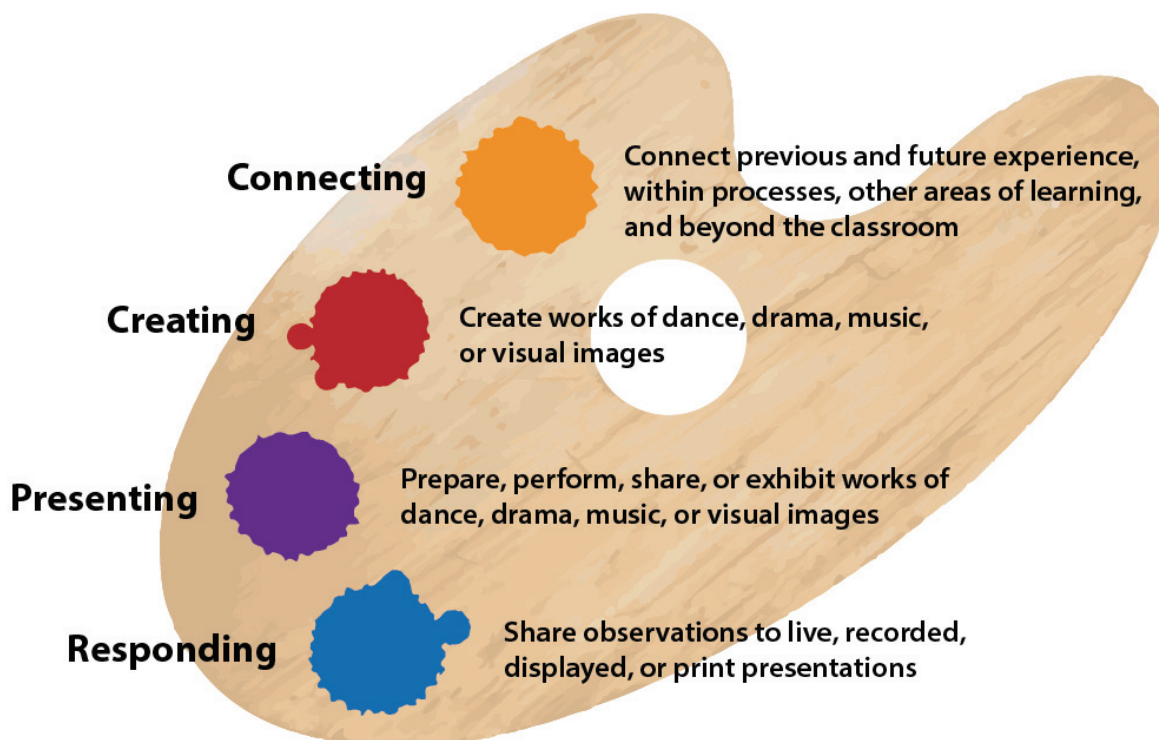
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Overview

Four broad, interrelated approaches apply to the learning experiences teachers design for students in all Arts Education disciplines. Learning in and through the arts involves complex processes that rely on experiences that are both (but not necessarily equally) teacher-led and student-centred. The continuum of development, together with students' increasing independence, aids in identifying appropriate levels of refinement, engagement, and challenge for students' creative work.

This document supports instruction in Arts Education and offers strategies for engaging students and celebrating their learning. While this is not a definitive how-to guide, it is one of many resources teachers may wish to use in planning for student learning in Arts Education. Numerous pedagogies and methodologies common to practice in Arts Education have relevance and influence in British Columbia's classrooms. As such, teachers are encouraged to explore the many means by which to offer inspired and inspiring instruction to the diverse population of students.

Since its previous edition,¹ this document now contains a section on *connecting*, purposefully placed at the start of the document. Teaching and learning in Arts Education does not occur in a vacuum. Keeping a focus on connection aligns this document with the K–12 Arts Education curriculum documents and the constant presence of connection in arts learning, creating, presenting, and responding.



¹Portions of the sections on connecting, presenting, and responding in this and previous editions, were adapted, with permission, from *Arts Education* (Curriculum Guides for Grade 1–5), *Saskatchewan Education*, September 1991.

Connecting

Among the goals of Arts Education is helping students develop the ability to see and understand connections between the arts and human experience. When planning for instruction in Arts Education, there are numerous ways to include points of connection to students' prior knowledge, experiences in and out of school, and emerging skills. Similarly, learning experiences in the arts have the potential to scaffold future experiences in the arts, other areas of learning, and life beyond school.

Drawing on the core competencies can be helpful when imagining points of connection or relevance to students' future growth or personal context. Connections can also be made through the arts to people, places, experiences, and issues on a local, regional, and global scale.

Strategies for CONNECTING in Arts Education

The following is a sample of strategies that can support teachers in designing and nurturing connections to help students link the arts and human experience.

- Projects that connect across areas of learning (e.g., using a Social Studies lens for studying Picasso's *Guernica*)
- Link current learning with language and processes across arts disciplines
- Draw from current local/global events for inspiration
- Explore the work of artists who confront, communicate, or convey response to current issues
- Develop profiles of artists whose work is shaped by social context
- Incorporate skills developed in other areas of learning (e.g., literary devices)
- Invite use of prior experience and knowledge gained at school and beyond
- Encourage revisiting of reflections or documented ideas captured in journaling
- Imagine future experiences, emerging interests and career aspirations
- Consider the relationship between artist and audience (e.g., considering perspective)
- Examine relationships between artists, mediums, genres, and community
- Participate in collaborative projects across curricular areas of learning, disciplines, styles and/or genres
- Visit "maker spaces" and engage in dialogue with artists or artisans
- Participate in regional or national arts-making events (e.g., Music Monday, International Dance Day, World Art Day, World Theatre Day, local and provincial festivals)
- Attend and/or view professional exhibits and performances
- Engage in interactive web-based projects with classes, schools, or artists from around the world
- Act as artists-in-residence for younger students, in community facilities, and public spaces in the school
- Create public installations to share learning with the wider school community
- Work collaboratively across multiple grades of students
- Engage in opportunities to work with post-secondary art students or local artists as mentors
- Create artwork that invites either active or passive audience participation

Ethical Connections with Aboriginal Artists, Art Making, and Artwork

British Columbia's redesigned education curriculum is infused with opportunities for teachers and students to share in building understanding of Aboriginal worldviews and perspectives. In the context of Arts Education, a challenge exists for teachers to provide authentic, ethical, and respectful instruction, given concerns about cultural appropriation or unintended disrespect to Aboriginal peoples and their cultures and tradition.

This supporting document endeavours to provide teachers with ideas and suggested strategies for planning meaningful and lasting learning opportunities that engage with Aboriginal artists, art making, and artwork.

Also of note is that all school districts in BC have strategies available to aid in inspiring rich, collaborative learning experiences for all. A designated [Aboriginal Education Coordinator](#) is available as a primary point of contact in each school district and as a resource for engaging with local strategies and developing collaborative connections. As well, [Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in the Classroom: Moving Forward](#) is an important resource developed collaboratively for arts educators in BC classrooms. Of particular relevance to developing connecting strategies in Arts Education, *Moving Forward* provides a set of links (pp. 72–75) and a series of questions to promote connections across the school community through *Co-operative Reflection on Practice* (pp. 76–77).

Authenticity

Aboriginal artists present authentic First Peoples voices through traditional and contemporary works of dance, drama, music, and visual art. These depict themes and issues important to First Peoples, such as

- loss of identity and affirmation of identity
- tradition
- healing
- role of family
- importance of Elders
- connection to the land
- the nature and place of spirituality as an aspect of wisdom
- the relationships between the individual and community
- the importance of oral tradition
- the experience of colonization and decolonization

These themes also variously incorporate First Peoples story-telling techniques and features (e.g., circular structure, repetition, weaving in of spirituality, humour). Place-based relationships, a tenet of the First Peoples Principles of Learning, can impact how authenticity is understood.

Cultural appropriation can occur when aspects of indigenous knowledge, artistic process, or style are presented either outside their context of origin or without careful attribution of the source. It is in these situations, even unintentionally, that the authenticity and significance of Aboriginal artists, art making, and artwork become diminished. While it may appear accessible for a teacher to bring Aboriginal arts into the classroom, replicating or teaching these arts without permission or

contextual understanding risks excluding and muting the voice of authenticity from the experience and can offend the people and communities from which the artwork has been drawn.

If there is any doubt, it is beneficial to ask oneself if the learning opportunity or collaboration is firmly grounded in the 4 Rs: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and relationships.² Modelling an ethical approach will support messages of respect, reconciliation, and authenticity, enhancing the shared experience for all involved.

References and Resources

The following resources and publications are provided to support teachers' thinking and planning, as and when needed. New publications and research are often released, so teachers should regularly check for further support materials.

Chrona, J. (n.d.). First Peoples principles of learning. Retrieved January 27, 2016, from <https://firstpeoplesprinciplesoflearning.wordpress.com/>

First Nations Education Steering Committee, & First Nations Schools Association (2012). *In Our Own Words: Bringing Authentic First Peoples Content to the K–3 Classroom*. West Vancouver, BC: First Nations Education Steering Committee.

Government of British Columbia. (2015). *Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in the Classroom: Moving Forward*. Victoria, BC: Queen's Printer for British Columbia.

Government of British Columbia. (2006). *Shared Learnings: Integrating BC Aboriginal Content K–10*. Victoria, BC: Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch, BC Ministry of Education.

Government of British Columbia (n.d.). Aboriginal Education Resources. Retrieved January 27, 2016, from <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/documents.htm>

Creating

Teachers play an active role in facilitating students' increased creative capacity and encouraging students' development of creative work. Students turn to teachers not only for instruction, but also for coaching, guiding, modelling, and inspiring during creative processes. Depending on the developmental context and students' prior experience, teachers may at first need to develop creative experiences that are structured, allowing students to practice and gain confidence with new skills and processes or to simply engage in purposeful play. As students become familiar with skills and processes, creative learning experiences can include more student choice, increased flexibility, and independent exploration.

²Kirkness, V.J. and R. Barnhardt (2001). First Nations and higher education: The four R's – respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility. In *Knowledge Across Cultures: A Contribution to Dialogue Among Civilizations*. R. Hayoe and J. Pan (eds.). Hong Kong, Comparative Education Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong. Available at <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/IEW/winhec/FourRs2ndEd.html>

As students get older, they often incorporate a more personal perspective into their work. By fostering a safe learning environment where it is acceptable to take creative and expressive risks, teachers can develop a classroom culture that allows work and ideas to be assessed without judgment. Teachers can also nurture students' creative explorations by providing a range of stimuli, inspirations, and time for developing either ideas or purposeful play. This activity contributes to the development of students who recognize and value many different approaches to creative expression.

Strategies for CREATING in Arts Education

The following are a sample of strategies that can support teachers in designing and structuring experiences for students creating in Arts Education. In practice, these experiences will vary in depth and breadth according to the developmental levels of the students.

- Establish an accepting and non-judgmental atmosphere where students feel safe and free to take creative risks
- Join with students in the experiences when appropriate to help establish trust
- Address any safety or procedural issues to support a positive learning experience
- Ensure creative experiences and related assessments are flexible enough to suit students with varied artistic abilities and cultural backgrounds
- Engage students in purposeful play, exploration, and improvisation using multiple approaches
- Provide opportunities for both individual and collaborative experiences
- Inspire students' imaginations to facilitate creative processes (e.g., by using pictures, digital images, poetry, stories, key words, sensory experiences, personal narrative, topical themes from other disciplines)
- Assist and guide students through creative processes
- Encourage students to keep digital or paper-based journals or sketchbooks to document their ideas
- Employ inquiry prompts from the companion Arts Education curriculum support document, *Creative Processes*, to guide students' thinking and self-assessment
- Support creative processes through formative assessment and feedback by the teacher, the student, and peers as students refine and reflect on their work
- Provide students with time to develop and practice the skills they need to refine their work
- Discuss objectives and establish criteria for assessment that include the intentions of the task or project and allow latitude for creative approaches
- Provide opportunities for students to reflect on and assess their own work and respond to the work of their peers
- Establish expectations for students' ownership of the development or rehearsal process, including the possibility of doing individual work outside of instructional time
- Help students prepare for and persevere through creative experiences. Encourage them to:
 - share ideas with peers or mentors
 - refine or rehearse their work for performance or exhibition

- view or listen to examples of dance, drama, music, or visual arts that illustrate the same principles they are exploring
- adapt or expand original ideas to create new works
- explore creations across arts disciplines (e.g., use a drama role as a stimulus for a visual artwork)
- document creative processes and growth (e.g., in journals, artist statements, video, photography)

Presenting

Arts Education values both process and product. Although it is not the intent of the Arts Education curricula to make presentation or performance the primary focus, all students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 should have opportunities to participate in formal and informal presentations of their own and others' work. Presenting is an opportunity to celebrate students, their work, and their developing abilities as curricular content and competencies coalesce. Students gain personal satisfaction and accomplishment when they are given opportunities to prepare, refine, and present their own work for peers, teachers, parents, or the public. This experience can, in turn, be an opportunity to celebrate and document student growth. Engaging students in the selection of work and in decision-making processes about how the work will be presented also provides a meaningful learning opportunity.

Presentation can take many different forms, including but not limited to:

- planned or impromptu performance
- exhibition
- display
- open rehearsal or open studio; students as artists-in-resident
- print or digital publication
- sharing of work privately with one or more teacher or peer
- audio- or video-recording
- formal or informal performance
- alternative presentation space (e.g., outdoor space)
- submission to community-based festival or exhibition
- social media, when shared ethically

Strategies for PRESENTING in Arts Education

Presentation can involve a variety of audiences and venues ranging from one-to-one sharing, to the classroom, to public spaces. The following is a sample of strategies that can support teachers in designing opportunities for students in presenting in Arts Education.

- Inform and engage students at the outset of a project about whether and how the work could be presented
- Ensure all students have an opportunity to participate
- Invite students to engage in student-teacher and student-student dialogue about their creative work and growth

- Record student work and securely store it for review outside of instructional time
- Identify opportunities to share the process as well as the final product
- Provide opportunities for students to share sensitive work privately
- Engage students in decision-making processes to select the most appropriate works or repertoire for a venue or audience
- Consider the presentation taking place in alternative spaces
- Promote an awareness of how venue and audience could impact the presentation
- Engage students in tasks that support the presentation (e.g., design and production of program, front of house, setup, publicity, organizing, curating, constructing, acting as docents, artist-in-residence)
- For dance, drama, music, and other performance arts, review specific expectations for the performance setting, such as:
 - appropriate warmup experiences
 - performance skills appropriate for the given situation (e.g., following the conductor, director, or leader, and directing the ensemble themselves as appropriate; entrances and exits; technical accuracy; maintaining individual parts and roles while respecting the work of the ensemble; interpretation and effect)
 - working co-operatively with collaborators and observing the role of peer leaders (e.g., section leader, stage manager, dance captain)
 - commitment to the rehearsal process (including individual out-of-class practice, as appropriate)
 - incorporation of production elements (e.g., sound, video, lighting, sets, costumes, staging)
- For visual arts, review specific expectations for the presentation setting, such as:
 - involvement of students in the organization, curation, and construction of displays or exhibitions
 - arranging works to showcase them at their best (e.g., consider height of works displayed, mounting, matting, framing, lighting, grouping)
 - having students serve as docents to guide guests through an exhibit
 - encouraging students to explain or demonstrate processes learned
 - use of artist statements and professional documentation (e.g., listing title, medium)
 - use of strategies that display or protect the work in web-based presentations (e.g., watermarks, thumbnails, necessary permissions, security, geographic location of web servers)
- Ensure that students have ample time to prepare and develop their work
- Provide opportunities for audience response
- Facilitate student discussions on topics related to presentation (e.g., ethical use of social media; intellectual property and copyright; censorship; sensitivity to audience)
- Document student work through
 - journaling
 - artist statements

- performance programs
- portfolios
- e-portfolios
- video
- photo
- blogs and vlogs
- permanent displays

Responding

Responding to the arts is an interactive process. As both creator and audience, students become familiar with and appreciative of the vast range of dance, drama, music, and visual arts that exist in their world. They develop a better understanding of the role of the arts in society.

Students bring their own varied perspectives and associations to a presentation, including their unique cultural and personal backgrounds. To respond authentically, an atmosphere of trust and respect is essential. A safe and supportive environment allows students to feel comfortable about expressing their personal opinions, knowing that their perspectives will be respected and will enhance other students' response experiences. Students also need to understand their role in maintaining that sense of trust and respect in the comments they contribute.

In providing opportunities for students to respond to performances and exhibitions, teachers should look for ways to enable a variety of aesthetic responses, including emotions (feelings evoked by the presentation), associations or connections (with previous personal, social, and cultural experiences), and intellect (analysis and interpretation).

Strategies for RESPONDING in Arts Education

The following steps can support teachers in developing formal and informal response opportunities. These steps may be combined or rearranged as appropriate to each situation (e.g., students responding to their own work, to the work of their peers, or to community and professional performances and works of art). The sophistication with which students communicate their observations, analysis, and interpretation can be expected to correspond to their individual developmental growth.

- Preparation — Establish the focus for viewing, experiencing, or listening to the work
- First impression — Encourage students to respond freely and spontaneously (i.e., there are no wrong answers)
- Description — Ask students to describe their experience using vibrant language
- Analysis of content and impact — Encourage students to:
 - examine how the components (e.g., performers, music, conductor, choreography, production elements, visual elements, principles of design) interact to achieve certain effects
 - identify particular cultures, styles, or time periods represented in the work

- use appropriate, discipline-specific terminology to describe the work or experience
- consider the expectations for the given context (e.g., Is this a final production or a work in progress? Is this work by a student or a professional? What level of performance or skill should be expected for the particular situation?)
- engage in self-assessment and the documenting of ideas for future creative work
- respond to their own work
- Interpretation — Encourage students to:
 - reflect on and discuss what the work means to each of them
 - analyze how their responses are influenced by their own experiences and perceptions of the world
 - use relational and reflective language
 - question or identify an artist’s intent
 - explore multiple interpretations of a given work
- Background information — Provide opportunities for students to learn about the various contributors to the dance, drama, music, or visual artwork (e.g., performers, composer, choreographer, writer, sculptor, painter, curator) and the historical and cultural context in which the work was created and presented. For example:
 - the origin of the work
 - the artist’s intent
 - the purpose of the work (e.g., social, ritual, ceremonial, celebratory, occupational)
 - the physical, social, and political geography of the creator’s country of origin
 - the beliefs and customs of the culture or society
 - any historical events that might have influenced the work
 - the symbolism, if any, used in the work
- Informed response — Ask students to consider their first impressions and whether or not their initial opinions or evaluations have changed as a result of discussions, research, and reflection

Responding to their own work or works of others opens opportunity to develop connections with artists near and far who may be like-minded or very different. Art can transcend boundaries of place and time and connect us with people and cultures who are also seeking to answer questions and bring understanding to our world. Artists who reflect on their own work and on that of others often and genuinely recognize the connection between the works of art and artists themselves.