Introduction to Arts Education

The redesigned Arts Education curriculum strives to galvanize students’ artful habits of mind through engaged arts learning. The curriculum includes a general arts program as well as four core discipline-specific programs — dance, drama, music, and visual arts — that capture the language, activities, and experiences unique to each of those disciplines.

Note that throughout the Arts Education curriculum, “artist” is used as an inclusive term to refer to people who create works in any of the arts disciplines (i.e., dancers, actors, musicians, visual artists). This usage views students as artists, too. Similarly, “works of art” is used to refer to the results of creative processes in any of the four disciplines.

Features of the redesigned Arts Education curriculum

The redesigned Arts Education curriculum promotes the arts as a means of self-expression and understanding of identity, and as a place in which to connect with artists, art processes, artwork, and arts learning in one’s own community.

Flexible teaching and learning

The language and design of the curriculum give teachers the flexibility to teach in any one of four core disciplines. Through the curriculum’s unified design, teachers have the option of creating learning experiences that combine two or more disciplines. The curriculum’s flexibility also accommodates both the range of program structures and school contexts across the province, and the range of student interest in pursuing arts learning in breadth or in depth.

A unified curriculum

The unified K-8 curriculum gives teachers the option of taking integrated instructional approaches, without having to follow a discipline-specific or interdisciplinary preference or priority. For Grades 9 and 10, both a unified and discipline-specific curriculum are provided, offering flexibility and choice for students with emerging and specific interests. The unified curriculum employs language shared by the disciplines rather than melding the disciplines into one; however, each discipline retains its distinguishable qualities and unique learning contexts.

Options for in-depth study

Building on the K-10 curriculum, discipline-specific curriculum in Grades 11 and 12 support those students who are committed to a greater depth of study in one or more of the four core disciplines. The curriculum transitions students to lifelong engagement with the arts, whether as a career choice, as a source of knowledge to incorporate into another field of work, or simply for enjoyment in daily life.
Lifelong learning
The curriculum supports the notion that all students, in becoming educated citizens, can develop artistic mindfulness in all aspects of their daily life, both during and beyond their school years. The curriculum connects skills, processes, and knowledge cultivated in students’ arts learning experiences to opportunities for application.

First Peoples Principles of Learning
Incorporating Aboriginal ways of knowing and the First Peoples Principles of Learning, the curriculum promotes informed and respectful engagement with Aboriginal arts, artists, and worldviews.

Creative and collaborative learning
While traditional collaborative performance learning environments (e.g., concert choir, orchestra, theatre, dance company) continue to be supported, the curriculum also allows for innovative and dynamic changes to program offerings as students’ interests change. Connections between grades respect the process-based nature of exploration, inquiry, and creation in the arts while transitioning student artists from experiences in purposeful play to experiences in improvisation and innovation. The curriculum reflects the notion that there are many processes and pathways through which creative potential is realized.

Design of the Arts Education curriculum
As for all areas of learning, the key concepts and competencies of the redesigned Arts Education curriculum are organized around the Know-Do-Understand model of learning. These are captured in Content (Know), Curricular Competencies (Do), and Big Ideas (Understand). More information about the model is available at www.curriculum.gov.bc.ca.

Content
Each discipline’s key concepts, elements, processes, and strategies are included in the Content column in a carefully thought-out progression of what students are expected to know. This progression ensures that students become aware of each element’s presence, use, and capacity. Content represents what students need to know to be able to achieve the Curricular Competencies.

Curricular Competencies
Curricular Competencies describe what students should be able to do with the knowledge they have gained. In every grade, each topic in the Content column can potentially be applied through multiple Curricular Competencies. The Arts Education curriculum at all grade levels supports a progression of study that engages students in discovering their artistic and creative potential through activities in dance, drama, music, and visual art. These learning standards, underpinned by the Arts Education Rationale and Goals, contribute to the development of the educated citizen.
The Curricular Competencies, which are directly linked to the Core Competencies, are structured around artistic habits of mind and engage students, when it is developmentally appropriate to do so, in:

- exploring with artistic curiosity
- creating with artistic intellect
- reasoning through considerations and possibilities
- reflecting on choices and imagining opportunities
- communicating ideas and perspectives
- documenting artistic growth and understandings
- connecting with themselves, artists, artworks, and the world
- expanding artistic capacity through perseverance

**Big Ideas**

The Big Ideas are the general statements and principles that shape both teaching and learning. They represent what students are expected to understand and take away from the curriculum — the deeper learning. Each Big Idea in the Arts Education curriculum can be explored through learning in any one or more of the four core disciplines — dance, drama, music, and visual art. The Big Ideas are intended to nurture in students an increasingly sophisticated ability to make connections among the artistic habits of mind.

The examples of Big Ideas below illustrate how the curriculum grows with students and expands the scope and depth of learning.

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<td>People connect to others and share ideas through the arts.</td>
<td>The arts connect our experiences to the experiences of others.</td>
<td>Experiencing art is a means to develop empathy for others’ perspectives and experiences.</td>
<td>Artists often challenge the status quo and open us to new perspectives and experiences.</td>
<td>Active participation in the arts is essential to building culture, expressing and exploring personal identity, and revealing insights into the human experience.</td>
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**Elaborations**

Elaborations have been provided for many of the Content and Curricular Competencies learning standards in the Arts Education curriculum. The Elaborations (included as hyperlinks) offer definitions, clarifications, examples, and further information about the topics or competencies at a given grade. Elaborations are not a mandatory part of the curriculum; they have been included simply to provide teachers with additional clarity and support. They may be particularly useful to teachers who are new to teaching Arts Education.
Creative processes

Ideas feed creative processes throughout everyday life. An idea might spark a new project or enhance a project midway through its development. Students experience this in all areas of learning, even though creativity is most often closely associated with learning in the arts.

The revised Arts Education curriculum reimagines the creative process away from a single, sequential process and toward the notion of multiple processes composed of phases of learning and development that generate quality thought and creative thinkers in any learning domain. The four phases of the creative process are described below. While they may not always exist in the order shown here, aspects of each phase will always be part of the whole process.

The **Creative Thinking** core competency comes alive through this model, which transcends discipline-specific language, cultivating active learning, metacognition, and transferable skills. The model poses questions that prompt inquiry in the creation of any type of project or demonstration of learning (e.g., essay, presentation, performance, artwork). These questions will challenge students to engage in research and observation activities that build self-awareness and self-efficacy through independent and/or collaborative learning. Suggested questions are contained in an instructional support document entitled “Creating, Presenting, and Responding in Arts Education” available at [www.curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/arts-education/](http://www.curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/arts-education/).

![Diagram of creative process]

**Explore and Focus**

Getting ready to be creative means getting ready to **think, learn, and share ideas**. Students learn about their own thinking and abilities while they explore their potential and develop a vision for creative success.
Select and Combine
Prior knowledge is an important asset when matching skills, elements, and techniques with a focused project. Many choices will be made during the development of a project and each will be based on the impact of the skills, elements, and techniques employed on their own or in combination. Inquiry prompts will guide some decision-making and develop mid-point assessment skills.

Refine and Reflect
A project needs time and opportunity to be assessed to see how it connects to its intention. As part of that assessment, it is important to review previous choices and understand how those choices impact the project. Sometimes this will mean reconsidering decisions, asking for the opinions of others, or repeating a task. Responding to these considerations facilitates confident, polished work.

Reflect and Connect
Bringing a creative project to completion is exciting, but the learning does not stop there. Every creative project, exercise, or experience builds knowledge, improves confidence in decision making, and refines an individual’s approach to creative processes. Reflecting on an experience might spark ideas for a new endeavour that continues to generate new learning. Linking prior learning helps us imagine what more can be achieved.

Important considerations
Safety Considerations
To ensure a safe learning environment, teachers should ask themselves the following questions before, during, and after an activity has taken place:

- Are students aware of established rules and procedures for safety (e.g., hearing conservation, health procedures when sharing instruments or costumes, warm-up and cool-down, vocal health and safety, safe use of materials and technologies)?
- Do they fully understand the instructions?
- Is the activity suitable to each student’s interest, confidence, and ability?
- Has the instruction been sequenced progressively to ensure safety?
- Are students being properly supervised?
- Are the facilities, equipment, and technologies suitable and in good repair?

Teachers are also encouraged to use professional safety reference guides, such as the Play It Safe manual from Actsafe.

In addition to ensuring physical safety, teachers should consider the emotional safety of students when planning instruction in dance, drama, music, and visual arts. This includes, but is not limited to, being sensitive to individual students; being prepared to respond to unique situations; and employing creative strategies to deal with rivalry, stress, fear of failure, stage fright, etc. As well, teachers should be mindful of activities that may cause emotional or psychological stress for
individual students (e.g., blindfolding, work in closed environments, solo performance, body contact, heterogeneous groupings), and be prepared to offer alternative strategies as necessary.

**Working with the arts community**

The broad nature of the arts as envisioned by the redesigned Arts Education curriculum requires that students learn through experience with a variety of art forms. All aspects of learning in Arts Education can be enriched when arts practitioners from the community are involved. Teachers are encouraged to provide these experiences for their students when possible and appropriate.

When teaching students about culture-specific art forms and contexts, engaging with experts from the community is particularly important in order to avoid offence or appropriation or misrepresentation of culture. Cultural appropriation includes the use of cultural motifs, themes, “voices,” images, knowledge, stories, songs, or drama without permission or appropriate context or in a way that may misrepresent the real experience of the people from whose culture the form is drawn.

Community artists can also act as mentors, providing feedback and perspective for students’ work.

When working with guest arts practitioners/instructors, teachers might consider the following approach:

- Familiarize yourself with your school and board/authority policies for involving guest practitioners/instructors in the classroom (e.g., reference checks).
- Meet with the guest arts practitioner/instructor ahead of time to:
  - discuss appropriate learning expectations
  - decide which areas of the curriculum are to be addressed by his or her involvement with the students
  - plan for the use of age-appropriate material
  - determine his or her needs during contact time with the students (e.g., space, technology, equipment, materials)
- Prepare students for the experience (e.g., discuss the expectations for process and etiquette, provide relevant background information).
- Debrief with students and guests after the sessions or presentations.

The Arts Education curriculum can also be enriched when students have opportunities to work as arts practitioners themselves, creating dance, drama, music, and visual art with or for use by peers, younger students, and the community at large. When students do this and work as choreographers, dramaturges, conductors, or visual arts teachers, encourage them to consider the following questions:

- What are participants able to reasonably accomplish at this grade level (i.e., in terms of their experience and their physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development)?
- What safety factors must be kept in mind?
- Which warm-up and cool-down activities need to be incorporated?
- Is the work appropriate for a school setting?
• What is the best way to work through and sequence the various parts of the work?
• What are the criteria for success?

Many community and web resources can be used for broadening the range of learning opportunities in the Arts Education curriculum. Key among these are:
• professional studios, performance groups, galleries, and associations
• high school, college, and university arts departments
• school and public libraries
• arts teachers’ associations
• community, provincial, and national arts councils
• arts-regulating and policy-making authorities
• Aboriginal artists and performance groups
• cultural associations, artists, and performance groups
• continuing education programs
• community and recreation centres
• arts periodicals and publications
• local radio and television stations (for access to audio-visual equipment)
• arts broadcasting
• arts and cultural festivals
• advocacy organizations