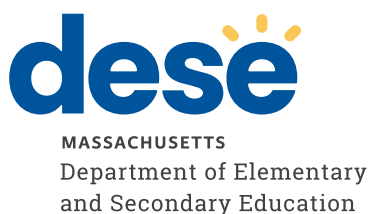




# ARTS CURRICULUM GUIDE

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APRIL 2026



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# INTRODUCTION



# WELCOME TO THE ARTS CURRICULUM GUIDE!

In certain disciplines—Arts, Comprehensive Health and Physical Education, History and Social Science, Digital Literacy and Computer Science, and World Languages—the marketplace for comprehensive core curricular materials is often limited. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) provides these curriculum guides to empower schools and districts to make informed, local decisions about curricular materials that support their implementation of the teaching and learning expectations defined by the [Massachusetts curriculum frameworks](#).

Curriculum guides may fulfill one or more of these strategic purposes:

- 1. Landscape Analysis:** Identifying available *core* and *supplemental* instructional materials, drawing from local and national sources.
- 2. Standards Alignment:** Assessing how closely materials match the depth and rigor of the Massachusetts content curriculum frameworks.
- 3. Gateway Review:** Determining if *comprehensive core materials* meet quality expectations to qualify for a full CURATE review (based on Massachusetts' college, career, and civic-readiness standards). These reviews are conducted primarily for content areas where a sufficient marketplace of comprehensive core materials exists.

The publication of this guide aligns with [Curriculum Matters: IMplement MA](#), an initiative to strengthen curriculum in Massachusetts. This initiative is rooted in a theory of action to advance DESE's [Educational Vision](#) and actualize the [Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate](#) through universal access to high-quality Tier 1 instruction for all students.

- *If* educators have the information, tools, and support they need to access, evaluate, and adopt, high-quality, standards-aligned, culturally & linguistically responsive curricular materials
- *and if* sustainable and collaborative professional learning structures help in-service and pre-service teachers understand and use those materials to orchestrate student learning experiences skillfully

- *then* teacher and student experiences, and ultimately student outcomes, will improve.

Districts can utilize the process detailed in the [IMplement MA Guide](#) to facilitate a robust evaluation, selection, and implementation of curricula. By following this intentional approach, schools and districts commit to sustain a written curriculum (materials) and an enacted curriculum (instruction) that support the growth and achievement of all students, while remaining deeply rooted in evidence-based practices that are [inclusive](#) and [culturally & linguistically sustaining](#).



# CONTEXT

This guide is intended to support Massachusetts educators who are investigating and selecting curricular materials for the arts by identifying promising materials worthy of further investigation by schools and districts. It contains information about arts curricular materials for all five disciplines: visual arts, media arts, dance, music, and theatre, that at least partially meet expectations for quality, including alignment to Massachusetts standards, cultural responsiveness, and teacher usability.

This guide synthesizes the findings of independent reviews conducted by arts educators and the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Reviews of materials occurred in three successive phases of work, and materials needed to pass each phase before moving onto the next. This means that everything which advanced to the In-Depth Review passed the Pre-Screening and the Baseline Review beforehand. These successive phases consisted of:

1. A Pre-Screening Checklist (conducted by Rennie Center) to screen for essential components of instructional materials such as student-facing materials, teacher facing-materials, and assessments;
2. Baseline Review (conducted by independent Massachusetts arts educators + Rennie Center staff), to evaluate for all four clusters of Artistic Processes (Creating, Performing/Presenting, Responding, Connecting); and
3. An In-Depth Review (conducted by panels of discipline-specific, Massachusetts

arts educators), with specific rubrics for each art discipline (dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual art), for calibrated evaluations of curricular materials.

Materials for review were collected from responses to the Research Making Change (RMC) Corporation report, [The Arts Matter in Massachusetts \(2024\)](#), as well as responses to Google Forms requesting submissions in the DESE Arts Quarterly Newsletter in January and February 2025. The Rennie Center as a partner in this project also contacted their network through an established curriculum publishers listserv and followed up with any contacts collected through a snowballing methodology. In total, more than 20 materials were reviewed across these three phases of work. This guide highlights those that educator reviewers found to be worthy of districts' consideration.

Refer to the [Appendix](#) for an overview of the Guiding Principles and Practices that define teaching and learning expectations of the [Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework](#).



# OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

This section describes strengths of reviewed materials and areas where materials need to be improved to better serve students and educators in their arts education.

## **Strengths of Available Materials**

*Authentic, meaningful tasks, particularly in contemporary art for visual arts, emerged as a strength of many materials reviewed by arts teacher advisors.*

Many materials support the development of artistic literacy and artistic intent in students, providing students with opportunities to experience various mediums and roles in their discipline, engage in all four clusters of artistic practice (creating, presenting/performing, responding, and connecting), connect their learning to the real world, and present/perform their art in meaningful ways in their communities.

## **Areas in Need of Improvement**

*Culturally responsive pedagogy and support for all students were identified as challenges in many materials.*

Numerous materials undervalue the contributions of people of color, reinforcing a Eurocentric pedagogy in the instruction of the arts. Additionally, too few materials provide opportunities for students to connect their learning to their own identities and lived experiences: for example, many materials present the historic context of art movements, but do not take the next step of bringing in a student's individual

identity and/or heritage in culturally and linguistically sustaining ways. In order to meet the needs of Massachusetts students and educators, the majority of resources reviewed by the visual/media arts panel and performing arts panel need to be adapted to better support culturally responsive pedagogy.

*Very few materials reviewed by arts expert advisors provide adequate scaffolds or adaptations that allow multilingual learners (MLs) and students with disabilities to meaningfully access discipline-specific content.*

Materials and lessons did not make explicit connections to how tasks were intentionally supporting MLs in the development of English language proficiency alongside arts content knowledge, aligned to the English language development standards (WIDA). Only a handful of resources provide vocabulary support or make connections to students' home language to support MLs. Most materials provide little to no recommended scaffolds or adaptations for students with disabilities. Publishers need to make more of an effort to make materials accessible for students who need accommodation. Massachusetts PK-12 arts educators will need to partner with their special education and ML support colleagues to make materials accessible for all students.



# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The following Steps were adapted from DESE's IMplement MA Guide, with adjustments made to support educators in explicitly considering the selection of new materials, given the specific arts context.

## **Before You Begin**

### **Define Your Vision, Priorities, and Parameters**

Before you adopt new curricular materials for the arts, it's important to gain clarity about the goals and constraints that will guide your choice. Consider:

1. **Instructional Vision:** What are your school or district's expectations for teaching and learning in the arts? What does effective instruction look like? What do you want students to be able to do as a result of their discipline-specific arts learning?
2. **Parameters:** What are the non-negotiables for your curricular materials? For the arts, this specifically may include budget, access to artistic materials (e.g. paintbrushes; instruments, etc.); technology requirements (e.g. digital platforms for media arts); spatial resources (e.g. stages for performance, etc.); and staffing or scheduling limitations (e.g. how often are art courses held?).
3. **Priorities:** What are the essential elements that curricular materials must contain in order to facilitate the realization of your arts instructional vision?

*The adoption of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) is a complex process that should be grounded in equity. For DESE's inclusive and robust four-phase*

*process to select and well implement HQIM, grounded in equity for students and aligned to the DESE Educational Vision, please see the IMplement MA Guide.*

## **Step 1**

### **Choose Curricular Materials**

This resource is intended as a starting place to provide information for choosing the right curricular materials for your local context, assets, and needs. Use the information in the arts discipline-specific section of the guide to determine which core materials might be a good fit for your needs. As part of your process to make a strong curricular materials selection, it is recommended that you evaluate them internally with your curriculum council against Domain 2 of the In-Depth Review Rubric, which lays out a more rigorous bar for quality and can help you identify additional strengths and challenges in the materials.

## **Step 2**

### **Identify Gaps**

No curricular materials are perfect. All materials rely on skillful implementation from teachers who need to consider their local contexts and student needs.

If you are using one of the materials included in this report, use the findings in the arts discipline-specific section, as well as any additional evaluation done at a local level, to identify gaps that will need to be mitigated during implementation. Consider your local priorities, vision, and priorities since the challenges reported may impact each school and district differently.

## **Step 3**

### **Adapt and Supplement Materials for Your Context**

Using your findings from Step 2, adapt and supplement materials to your context. Skillful adaptation is a critical component of an arts teacher's role on a day-to-day basis. Teachers must use differentiation and scaffolding to meet the needs of all students,

adjust materials and practices to be responsive to their particular students' experiences and identities, and take advantage of opportunities to connect students' artistic learning to current events, other disciplines, and other bodies of knowledge.

## **Step 4**

### **Engage in Ongoing Professional Learning**

Quality materials alone do not make for an engaging arts experience. Engage in regular professional development to build your content knowledge, strengthen your skills to deliver instruction in a culturally responsive manner, and adapt materials to your students' unique needs.

Many of the resources reviewed in this report feature information about connected professional development providers for the arts in the specific discipline.



# CURRICULUM GUIDE FORMAT

## Overview

This Arts Curriculum Guide provides reviews of available core instructional materials for each of the five arts disciplines: dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts. Beyond the core materials, the guide highlights a selection of additional promising options for arts instructional materials. The Appendix provides details about the 2019 MA Arts Curriculum Framework and the in-depth content-area criteria from the rubrics used for reviewing instructional materials.

## About the Content Area Rubrics

Arts educators served as expert advisors evaluating instructional materials against the in-depth content-area rubrics, developed by the Rennie Center, based on [CURATE rubrics](#) used in other content areas by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Rubrics assessed arts curricular materials on the following domains and criteria:

## Standards Alignment

Materials are aligned to content and practice standards by grade levels (covering coherence and organization, as well as classroom tasks and instruction. Unlike other content areas that often specify standards for each individual grade, the [Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework \(2019\)](#) organizes content standards in *grade spans* or *dyads* (ex: grades 1-2, and 3-4) for PreK-12, with high school standards organized into the three course levels of *Foundational*, *Proficient*, and

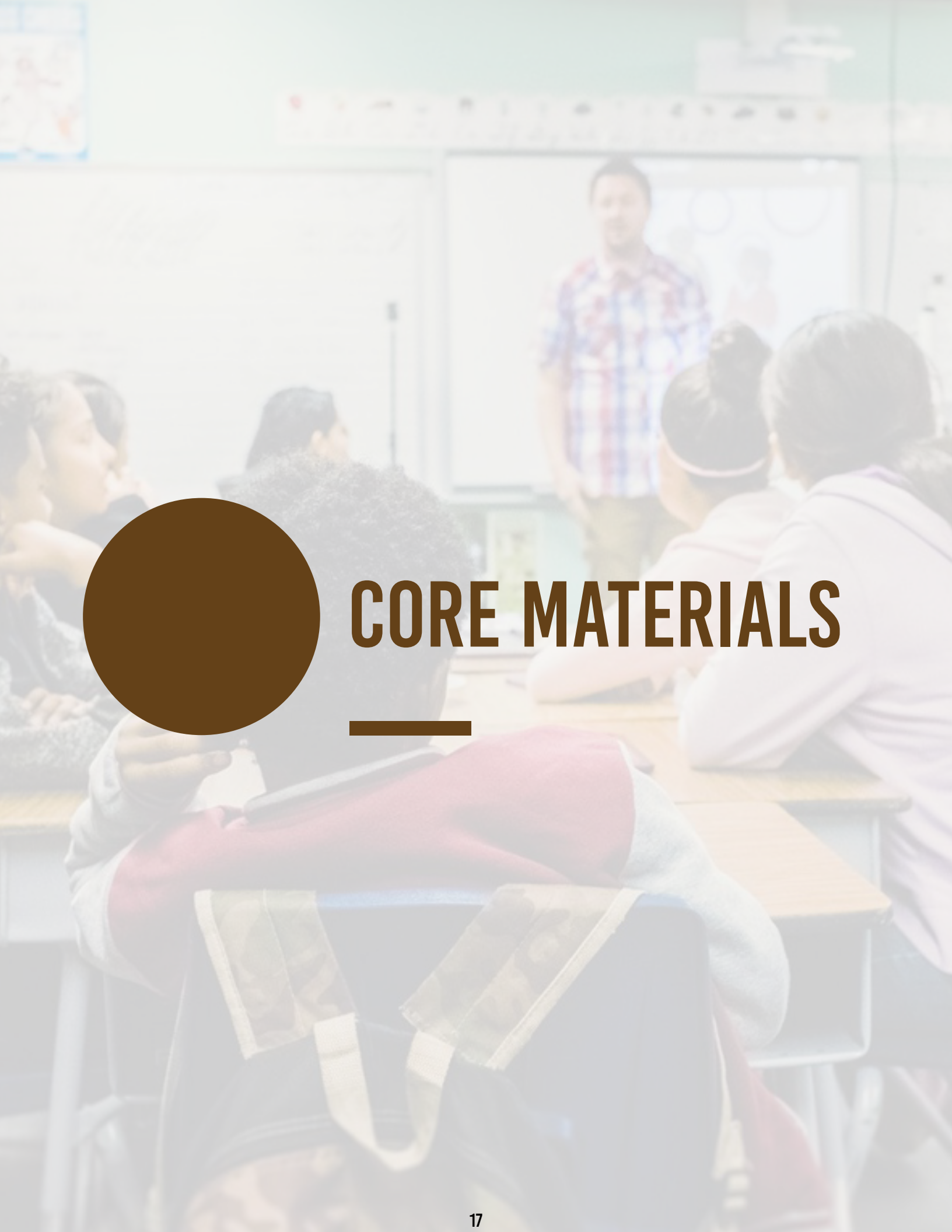
*Advanced.*

This structure is intentional: it accommodates the wide variability with which students enter and progress through their arts education, as well as reflects the development of artistic skills over time through practice, iteration, and exploration, which may not occur at a uniform pace. Additionally, arts standards are framed around the four artistic practice standards set forth in the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS) of *Creating, Performing/Presenting, Responding, and Connecting*, which emphasize the development of process-oriented thinking and creative intent over fixed content knowledge. The Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework (2019) draws on NCAS, maintaining the core artistic processes and key concepts, while adapting structures and reorganizing content to reflect Massachusetts' priorities, cross-disciplinary connections, and vision for arts education.

This more flexible, holistic approach supports the deep learning required for the development of artistic intent and literacy, but it can also make the evaluation of standards alignment in instructional materials less straightforward. Throughout this report, we've chosen to highlight materials that honor the instructional design unique to arts education. Educators may need to modify or supplement with integrity the materials included in this report to ensure coherent progression aligned to both the Standards for Artistic Practice and the specific content standards for each discipline and level.

### ***Classroom Application***

Materials are designed for student engagement, development of artistic literacy and artistic intent, and provide opportunities for students to connect their learning to their own identity and experiences (covering Student Accessibility), and Materials support teachers with suggested classroom routines and structures, as well as support teacher planning and preparation in order to use materials skillfully (covering Teacher Usability). Analyses of supports for multilingual learners, considerations of English language development standards (WIDA), and students with disabilities were conducted.



# CORE MATERIALS





# VISUAL AND MEDIA ARTS MATERIALS

## ART21: 9-12

[Art21](#) is a national nonprofit organization with a mission of educating and expanding access to contemporary art through the production of documentary films, resources, and public programs. Art21 serves educators and students by providing accessible, free materials and programs devoted to the exploration of contemporary art and artists. Art21's 15 Educator Guides and 12 Screening Guides are “designed as resources to facilitate discussions and activities in the classroom, before, during, and after the viewing of Art21 films,” and “can be used to plan a meaningful public viewing of Art21 films.” The “Artist Speak” series, published between 2005 and 2007 but now discontinued, provide a collection of one-page artist biographies, themes, and activity ideas centered around artists from the Educator and Screening Guides. The “Teaching with Contemporary Art READ” section has a new article each month, with dozens of articles written by teachers about how they use contemporary art and Art21 resources in their classroom.

### **Overview of Findings**

The report below presents findings, including areas of particular strength as well as challenges, of the Art21 curriculum for Grades 9-12.

### **Standards Alignment: Strengths**

The Art21 Educator Initiative is a well-organized site of resources, containing Educator Guides, Screening Guides, and an “Artist Speaks” series, all designed to engage students in critical thinking through creating, responding, presenting, and connecting, and expose them to a variety of 21st century contemporary art and creative ideas linking community, society, and history.

- Art 21 embraces a wide spectrum of creative concepts and challenging standards-aligned content through its lesson tasks. The materials focus on teaching young adults how to think and act like artists, developing their critical thinking skills, artistic literacy, and understanding of artistic intent through a series of narratives, videos, and teacher guides. For example, students are exposed to a photographer from Arlington, Massachusetts who features the unhoused population in her images, centering her works on “anonymous people” on the margins of society in the American West.
- Materials feature a brilliant collection of mediums, narratives, spaces, and themes, and a range of contemporary art that support students’ abilities to build their artistic literacy. Each unit, discussing an artist's work, explains the artist’s thought and articulates the artist’s progression. Together, these features support the development of students’ artistic intent and technical skills.
- Materials are aligned to the guiding principles and artistic practices of Massachusetts arts content standards because they are open-ended and holistic by design, encouraging school-based experimentation, socially engaged artwork, and development of students’ understanding of craft in contemporary art.

## **Standards Alignment: Limitations**

Art21 does not provide a scope and sequence progression because their resources are used across the US and globe. The materials omit the step-by-step guidance that would provide the appropriate level of depth and complexity needed for its marketed K-12 use. Ultimately, its content is more suitable for 9-12 use.

- Art21 is explicitly designed to be solely “standards-based” and the materials depend upon the individual educator for mapping alignment to grade-appropriate tasks and standards and considerations of cross-curricular learning. Free professional development and teacher-written articles are provided to navigate the challenge of how to use the resources. While this may be feasible for a skilled and experienced teacher, the lift for effective implementation from a novice educator would be considerable.
- For lessons that contain content that is not developmentally appropriate for children, Art21 provides a disclaimer encouraging educators to “use the materials according to their needs... [and to] watch all videos” on their own before usage. For example, a unit on Sally Mann features images of nude children and may provoke social norms (e.g. holding a cigarette) and will likely require district/parental approval prior to usage. The onus falls upon the individual educator to consider instruction of controversial topics, which also tend to be more appropriate for high school students, although the materials are marketed as K-12. For art educators in K-8, both professional development sessions and articles by elementary teachers are provided as ways for teachers of these grades to learn about best practices.

## **Classroom Application: Strengths**

### ***Student Accessibility:***

Art21 is designed for ease of student access by providing information in many multimodal formats for diverse approaches to engagement: videos, themes, narratives, written articles, and more. In support of students’ diverse needs, Art21 also invites students to engage in meaningful social critique, engages them in many opportunities for development of complex thought, and promotes each student’s identity as a body of knowledge.

- There are often many different ways provided for students to engage in critical thinking and communicate their ideas about artistic intent: discussion-based prompts prior to a viewing, prompts for self-reflection while viewing, and ample opportunities for both individual and group work when engaging with art.

- Additionally, the materials highlight the lives and contributions of individuals representing diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Students are pushed to consider how different populations and diverse identities are represented. For example, artists included are international artists such as Pakistani figurative painter Salman Toor, artists such as Katy Grannan (the Arlington-born photographer of unhoused populations referenced above), or Kevin Beasley, a sculptor and sound artist who uses “found materials, [such as] clothing, sports equipment, personal artifacts, and cultural ephemera...[to portray] historical and cultural references...in order to examine the role of power and race in American society.”

### ***Teacher Usability:***

Art21 supports usability for teachers through an intuitive, well-designed website with an easy to navigate layout, and an effective platform designed for educator choice. The materials are categorized by themes, artists, and media: this level of choice is great for teacher flexibility. With this structure, teachers can choose to follow an entire season sequentially over the course of a year, or they can modify the curriculum by selecting specific topics, themes, or artists to support other lessons. This allows for seamless integration into various instructional plans and timeframes.

- Additional support materials can be found under the “For Educators” section, which offers more in-depth curriculum PDFs organized by season and artist.
- Additionally, the materials include guidance resources focused on pedagogy, such as “Teaching for Artistic Behaviors,” or a glossary of terms to support teachers’ subject matter knowledge in the visual arts discipline, or an additional “Art21 Educators Program for Professional Development.” There are also examples for establishing creative routines: “Teaching with Contemporary Art,” for instance, gives explicit routines on “designing the learning space in the spirit of a studio or laboratory.”
- Lastly, the Educator Guides provide real-world examples of how other educators have implemented projects inspired by contemporary artists, and the Teaching with Contemporary Art READ section features articles written by educators as well. Although not prescriptive, these provide a helpful foundation for

planning instruction around contemporary artistic practices that connect to the students' district or community.

## **Classroom Application: Limitations**

### ***Student Accessibility:***

Although all of Art21's films have closed captioning and the website is going through an accessibility audit with upgrades for screen readers, materials do not provide explicit supports or scaffolds for multilingual learners (MLs) or students with disabilities (SWDs). The skill of working with diverse student populations, accommodating diverse needs, and providing differentiation for different learners is dependent on the individual educator.

- Many of Art21's films are translated into a variety of languages to support multilingual students. For the fullest list, teachers are directed to use YouTube.
- There are considerations of accessibility for audiences included in the Screening Guides (e.g. wheelchair access, closed captioning) for in-person programs through the Screening Society program.
- However, the Guides, intentionally designed to be open sourced and flexible, do not provide direct, coherent connections between art and socioemotional learning (SEL) and skills. Integration of SEL connections occurs instead in professional development workshops for teachers.

### ***Teacher Usability:***

The materials would benefit from more explicit guidance regarding pacing and assessment.

- There is little to no guidance on pacing or information on how long a unit would take, which could be cumbersome to estimate effectively. Teachers are encouraged to attend Art21 professional development sessions or read articles by other educators to learn about pacing.
- Additionally, teachers will need to create their own tools to measure student learning in authentic and meaningful ways. There is little to no explicit guidance

on assessments, no codified rubrics, no formative or summative ways provided to check for student mastery. Structures are only intended to support thematic exploration and engagement.

# DAVIS ART PUBLICATIONS K-12

(Explorations in Art K-6; Experience Art; The Visual Experience 4E; Communicating Through Graphic Design 2E; Discovering Drawing, Experience Painting; Focus on Photography; Experience Clay 3E)

[Davis Art](#) is a paid visual arts curriculum and publishing platform offering materials in both print and digital formats for grades K–12. Its resources include teacher guides, SchoolArts Magazines (magazines focused on visual arts projects and professional development, with lessons and articles “written for art educators by art educators”), and free adaptive art resources. Designed with flexibility, curricular materials from Davis Arts Publications support arts instruction across multimedia experiences and grade bands.

## **Overview of Findings**

The report below presents findings, including areas of particular strength as well as challenges, of Davis Art Publications K-12 (Explorations in Art 2E K-6; Experience Art; The Visual Experience 4E; Communicating Through Graphic Design 2E; Discovering Drawing 3E, Experience Painting 1E; Focus on Photography 2E; Experience Clay 3E)

## **Standards Alignment: Strengths**

The Explorations in Arts (K-6) series are strongly aligned to National Core Arts Standards (NCAS), (upon which the Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework (2019) is built), with clear essential questions, focus questions, themes, studio objectives, pacing, and direct connection to standards.

Books provide comprehensive learning experiences for students, while lesson plans include structures that align to the artistic practices, such as studio habits, cross-curricular connections, and systemically designed scaffolding to build a coherent progression of learning. For example, the “Experience Clay” unit is structured

sequentially with essential questions, tips for implementation, images, a slideshow, vocabulary exposure, objectives, differentiated instruction, and a culminating “art history” portion.

Materials emphasize artistic intent by building cross curricular and real life connections, support extending learning beyond just making the art, and depth of knowledge, and support learning beyond just making the art by aligning to the artistic practices of creating, responding, presenting, and connecting.

## **Standards Alignment: Limitations**

While NCAS standards correlation is provided for some materials, standards alignment becomes less explicit for most secondary grades 7–12, with more open-ended or studio-based lessons. Lessons in secondary grades are inconsistently mapped to standards, requiring educators to interpret and implement effectively in a progression, which may be challenging for novice teachers.

## **Classroom Application: Strengths**

### ***Student Accessibility:***

Materials are well-designed to highlight student identity, bring in student voice, and develop students’ understandings of artistic intent.

- Students are provided with reflection prompts, discussion questions, and written components that allow them to articulate their artistic choices in their own words. Many lessons also encourage storytelling and personal narrative, giving students the space to connect their cultural and linguistic backgrounds to their art-making.
- Additionally, materials provide multiple access points for diverse learners covering a variety of modalities, including adaptive resources, visual supports, videos, sentence stems, asynchronous learning options, and glossaries. For example, the Teacher’s Editions and resources on the Davis Publication website

include the Adaptive Art Resources, a section dedicated to supporting teachers in instruction of a wide range of students needs, including gross and fine motor adaptations, visual and cognitive adaptations, as well as sensory, emotional, and behavioral supports.

- Lessons also feature a “Sense of Belonging” section to introduce, foster, and develop social emotional skills.
- Lastly, many materials are translated to Spanish, and some point-of-use scaffolding is provided to support multilingual students with diverse needs.

### ***Teacher Usability:***

The materials are rich in resources and supports for educators: lessons are well-structured, clearly sequenced, and easy to implement, with a particular highlight being the “Suggested Classroom Routines” provided in each lesson.

- Teachers are provided with a list of studio experiences, materials list, guidance during the process, display and presentation ideas, and a rubric for evaluation
- The materials provide not only “Essential Questions” but also “Focus Questions,” which can assist educators in identifying areas of common misconceptions and tightening the lens on what students are learning.
- High-quality assessment tools such as explicit rubrics, culminating projects, exemplars, other varied assessments, and even extension tasks, are included.
  - These help set clear expectations for student artmaking, production, and presentation. Additionally, these resources make it easy for teachers to measure learning in authentic, meaningful ways and to support students in developing their ideas with confidence and clarity.
  - For example, in the Photography unit, the rubric provided went beyond task completion and checkboxes: it evaluated Planning, Media Use, Work Process, and even Innovation as criteria, allowing for meaningful evaluation of student engagement and authenticity.
- Pacing was reasonable, flexible, and adaptable: within any module, teachers have the freedom to select from a wide range of projects and application guidance to a variety of contexts.

- The SchoolArts Magazines add another layer of depth by offering current and archived issues focused on specific mediums or themes, allowing teachers to customize their pacing and sequence. The structure of the materials supports both short- and long-term planning across diverse classroom settings.
- Strong tools also exist for teacher professional development and arts-specific classroom routines.

## **Classroom Application: Limitations**

### ***Student Accessibility:***

Despite the strong resources provided, materials do not consistently embed robust supports for diverse learners or social-emotional learning directly into lesson plans.

- Differentiated instruction strategies that support a range of learning styles and multilingual learners exist, such as visual journaling, mock interviews, and even Spanish-language resources. However, Spanish-language resources are limited to providing information in Spanish, rather than consistently supporting English language development pertaining to the content.
- Pre-modified lesson versions or built-in accommodations that teachers can apply directly for students with disabilities are hard to locate.
- Supports for diverse learners are provided inconsistently, with the least amount of scaffolding and support provided in grades 9-12.

### ***Teacher Usability:***

Ease of use, especially for novice educators, may be a limitation caused by the organization of resources and inconsistent unit and pacing guidance. Materials that are included are dispersed across several tabs and formats, making navigation challenging.

- There are various supporting resources across the platforms, such as the Adaptive Art resources for accommodations, but educators must toggle and incorporate these elements themselves, which requires time and intention to

find and implement effectively.

- Teachers may need multiple tabs open and additional guidance to locate full curricular sequences.

Unit Organizers and Pacing Guides exist in Teachers Editions for the earlier grades, but the secondary grades lack this explicit guidance.

## **Another Promising Option (Elevated)**

As a part of their SchoolArts Magazines, Davis Art Publications offers a specific [Media Arts Collection Book](#) resource that is intended to support K–8 arts educators in teaching digital and new media arts. It is an independent, standalone booklet meant to edify even beginner media arts instructors on media arts, and provides engaging, simplified guidance from the perspective of actual classroom teachers on potential projects in media arts. While the resource does not provide step-by-step lesson plans with detailed instructions on what to do each day, each article does provide a suggested project with identified and explicit objectives, essential questions, materials/resources, and connected national media arts standards, upon which the Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework (2019) is built. Additionally, the "lesson plans" included are quite diverse and explore socially and culturally relevant topics (using text and photography to construct personal meaning, etc.) through 21st-century art skills and tools, such as virtual reality, 3D printing. The resource is 138 pages long, covers 5 units (Part 1: Defining Media Arts; Part 2: Digital Design; Part 3: Film, Animation, & Game Design; Part 4: Virtual Reality, 3D Printing, & Robotics; Part 5: Digital Photography), and provides 6-10 projects for each of the 5 units. The materials are delivered via a magazine-style platform with flexible, high-interest activities submitted by practicing arts educators. The resource is organized around student-facing tasks and demonstrations of learning.

Please note: while the SchoolArts Magazine: Media Arts Resource includes engaging examples and opportunities for multimedia creation, it is not intended as a core curriculum and therefore does not provide consistent curricular structure nor robust, embedded supports for accessibility or cultural relevance.

DESE chose to include the SchoolArts Magazine: Media Arts Resource in our review because of the dearth of instructional materials available solely for the instruction of media arts and is seeking additional media arts curricular materials for the next

iteration of our review. If you use any media arts instructional materials in your school or district that are worthy of review, please email [dawn.m.benski@mass.gov](mailto:dawn.m.benski@mass.gov).

## **Overview of Findings**

The report below presents findings, including areas of particular strength as well as challenges, of SchoolArts Media Arts Resource (6-12).

### **Standards Alignment: Strengths**

The SchoolArts: Media Arts Resource is well-laid out and thoughtfully designed which strengthens coherence, with each unit containing an overview of the project, an explanation of the history of its artistic components (e.g. digital photography with text overlay), a section for definition and terminology, a side panel with explicitly defined objectives, essential questions, materials resources, national media arts standards covered (upon which the Massachusetts 2019 Arts Curriculum Framework is built), and another page of instructions for the teacher.

- Many featured units reflect contemporary media arts practices for creating, responding, presenting, and connecting (e.g., animation, digital drawing, photography, sound art) and foster student creativity and self-expression.
- Units often contain clear, rigorous goals and are thoughtfully designed with tasks that nurture thoughtful analysis and develop intentional artistic literacy in students. For example, a unit on digital imagery allows students to experiment with mediums in a way that transfers knowledge and introduces students to digital imagery, with a level of complexity and thought that pushes student engagement.

Materials promote meaningful connections with other disciplines and bodies of knowledge and also develop students' social-emotional skills in authentic ways.

- For example, the “Concrete Poetry” project weaves in topics of bullying,

sociopolitical, and environmental issues skillfully, allowing students to not only connect with the content areas of English Language Arts (ELA) and art history but also to problems facing their real community in ways that extend their learning.

## **Standards Alignment: Limitations**

While connected standards are mentioned, standard alignment is inconsistent or not provided across the resources, with no clear mapping to the state or national arts standards being addressed as they progress through the grade levels.

- Since the product is a supplemental curriculum resource presented as a magazine and not a comprehensive core curriculum, the lessons are contributed by various educators and do not follow a shared framework.
- Without more robust resources such as rubrics, pacing guides, or formative/summative assessments, learning tasks are not easily measurable or clearly articulated.

## **Classroom Application: Strengths**

### ***Student Accessibility:***

Lessons often include multimodal approaches, such as visual instructions, rubrics, and examples in ways that are engaging for students and consider their authentic selves. The emphasis on multimedia allows for different modes of expression and demonstration of learning.

- For example, the “Who is an American?” unit has objectives that explicitly ask to consider students’ cultural identities, guide them in the construction of their personal identity as an American, and engage with peers and community members on relevant, complex ideas and topics. The unit objectives are to: “discuss and consider national and cultural identity with your classmates, friends, and family; construct a personal definition of what it means to be an

American in today's world; and create a short video sharing your ideas on culture and American identity." These engaging, personal, big-picture questions push learners to think and produce critical artwork that celebrate students' diverse lives, identities, and communities, while simultaneously giving students choice on how to address the original challenge. The built-in dialogue between prompt and product gives all students a way to talk about identity in real, observable terms.

### ***Teacher Usability:***

The resource is visually intuitive and presents a wide variety of media arts ideas that teachers can adapt with reasonable, flexible pacing. Articles are practitioner-written and reflect real classroom scenarios, with most lessons beginning with a short routine for getting started, step-by-step instructions for setup, creation, and closing reflections. Because the resource is a compilation of submissions from practicing teachers, there is great ease of implementation: teachers get basic structures, guidance on how to launch a task, and even supports for common places where students may stumble.

- For example, in the "Constructing Personal Meaning: Collage with Appropriated Text and Original Photography (p.26)" unit, each step is mapped out with a paragraph of teacher instructions, as well as guidance to the important components of Adobe Photoshop for Painters, such as Brightness and Contrast, Curves vs. Saturation, etc. With this detailed instruction of how to construct the product, educators that are not fully experts in digital media can access the unit easily to build subject matter knowledge in the media arts discipline.

## **Classroom Application: Limitations**

### ***Student Accessibility:***

Despite its engaging structure, supports for multilingual learners (MLs), students with disabilities, or neurodiverse students are not embedded into the projects themselves. Few lessons include scaffolding, sentence stems, or UDL-aligned

strategies. Visuals and multimedia tools are not consistently optimized for accessibility.

### ***Teacher Usability:***

The format lacks several opportunities to build teacher knowledge, such as providing a cohesive scope and sequence, formative assessment and summative assessment rubrics. Teachers must curate and adapt content substantively.

- Because the resource is intended as a magazine rather than a cohesive core curriculum, each project serves as almost a “standalone” submission from an educator, rather than units building upon each other for skill progression.
- There is minimal to no teacher guidance around formative or summative assessments of learning or pacing. Formal rubrics other than what the teacher would witness during learning, student production outcome, or teacher created assessments, do not exist.
  - For example, at the end of the project “Photoshop for Painters (pg. 41),” students are suggested to complete a self-assessment rubric and peer critique.” However, teacher guidance consists only of questions to consider rather than explicit structures to evaluate learning.
- Most guidance for teacher learning appears inside the unit write-ups themselves instead of extended resources for professional development and meaningful connections to professional learning networks.
  - Sidebars across units flag useful software, note common misconceptions, and suggest ways to extend projects beyond the classroom. These embedded notes provide teachers with a solid starting point, offering practical context and gentle subject-matter refreshers right where they are needed. However, especially with the speed at which media arts changes as a discipline, there is a missed opportunity to provide stand-alone resources, sample professional development modules, updated readings (especially on newer areas such as artificial intelligence in media arts), or links to professional networks, that would deepen educator support and keep the content current while aligning to the media arts content standards.



# PERFORMING ARTS MATERIALS

## CREA MOVEMENT BY DANCE FOR SCHOOLS 9-12

[Crea Movement by Dance for Schools](#) is an online, for-purchase, national dance curriculum rooted in the National Core Arts Standards upon which the 2019 Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework is built, focused on high school dance instruction across multiple genres. Structured, comprehensive, and standards-aligned, Crea Movement offers 14 units with over 180 lessons, organized into thematic and genre-based units, and includes dance resources to teach students dance technique, creativity movement, composition, and dance history. Crea Movement is intended to “teach creative dance and personal expression, connect movements and techniques to students’ lives, teach dance history and cultural contexts, write in dance, and help students fall in love with dance as a lifetime activity.”

### **Overview of Findings**

The report presents findings, including areas of particular strength as well as challenges, of Crea Movement by Dance for Schools for Grades 9-12.

### **Standards Alignment: Strengths**

The curriculum is well-aligned with national dance standards and therefore, it is

directly applicable to the 2019 Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework, with all content standards addressed across 14 comprehensive units, and thorough lessons designed to clearly progress in skill and concept development.

- The materials are well organized and provide robust resources ranging from dance history to creative dance to dance rubrics, assessments, data trackers, and more. Each genre of dance covered has a pedagogically sound, well-executed foundational unit from a technical perspective, as well as a thorough examination of historical and social context with a spiraling progression of terminology in a more specific dance context. Learning occurs in a scaffolded and intentional way, increasing in complexity as the curriculum progresses and students learn more skills.
- Units provide clear progression from foundational skills to practical application. They culminate in a capstone performance that challenges students to engage with their artistic intent and make meaningful artistic choices.
- Lessons are consistently designed to include reflective components like exit tickets and student goal setting to support students in demonstrating their learning in dance.

## **Standards Alignment: Limitations**

- The materials are designed to emphasize the “Performing” cluster primarily. While the other artistic processes (Creating, Responding, and Connecting) are included, they are not equally weighted in instructional design.
- Additionally, while there were meaningful connections to music and sports movement, there were missed opportunities around connections to other disciplines and bodies of knowledge, or more contemporary historical perspectives.
- For example, the hip-hop unit includes only limited background information for teachers, and the history of hip-hop slideshow only asks students to make connections between social dances in hip-hop contexts and in their own life. This was a missed opportunity to address the genre originating from a rich

history, culture, place, and time, and as a response to sociopolitical issues.

## **Classroom Application: Strengths**

### ***Student Accessibility:***

The curriculum attempts to provide students with accessible learning that is inclusive of diverse backgrounds and identities.

- Robust resources are provided, including language objectives for multilingual learners (MLs), or tasks with supporting scaffolds such as sentence stems, student checklists, graphic organizers, and rubrics to help guide students toward clear learning goals.
- Tasks are measurable and appropriately leveled, especially for secondary students. There are multiple opportunities for both individual and group work.

### ***Teacher Usability:***

Lesson plans include detailed warm-ups, clear objectives, and structured routines that support teacher implementation.

- Background content and historical context are often embedded in the unit overviews and slideshows, integrating opportunities to develop teacher subject matter knowledge effectively.
- Peer coaching tools and grouping strategies are strong, offering options for mixed-ability engagement.

## **Classroom Application: Limitations**

### ***Student Accessibility:***

The curriculum lacks adaptations for students with disabilities or mobility needs and does not explicitly support neurodivergent students.

- Assessments and rubrics focus heavily on physical demonstrations of learning, with few alternative modalities for demonstrating knowledge. The multimodal

potential of visual resources (e.g., slideshows) is underutilized.

- Social-emotional learning is rarely integrated meaningfully, with missed opportunities for students to express or regulate emotions through dance.

### ***Teacher Usability:***

Despite the benefits of its robust resources, the curriculum is vast, making it difficult to implement in its entirety within a school year. Additionally, there is a lack of pacing guidance, no clear scope and sequence progression, or cornerstone lesson recommendations.

- Without these resources and with minimal guidance for teachers unfamiliar with the subject matter knowledge of dance or new to curriculum adaptation, materials will prove challenging to implement effectively.

Lastly, while background information is included for teachers, it is sometimes superficial or outdated and rarely connected to contemporary practice or incorporating local community contexts into dance lessons (for example, see the hip-hop unit discussed in the Student Accessibility criterion). Assessment tools often focus more on summative evaluations than formative, growth-based measures.

# ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF MUSIC K-12 BY HAL LEONARD

[Essential Elements](#) is a paid, modular music program with digital and print instructional materials available for grades K-5 and modular units available for grades 6-8 in World Drumming, Guitar, and Modern Band. Discrepancies in the characteristics of content led to a separate evaluation of the Guitar Module from the World Drumming and Modern Band Modules.

Essential Elements Music Class contains a “song library [that covers] elementary music standards, popular music, and Disney favorites—all professionally arranged and professionally recorded specifically with the elementary music classroom in mind.” It offers “180 fully developed, sequential lessons that seamlessly integrate social emotional learning competencies and musical skills vertically aligned for various age levels.”

## **Overview of Findings**

The report below presents findings, including areas of particular strength as well as challenges, of Essential Elements Music Class K-5, 6-8 by Hal Leonard. Again, because of the discrepancy in content between the modules in grades 6-8, this report evaluates World Drumming and Modern Band separately from Guitar.

## **Standards Alignment: Strengths**

Materials are aligned to national arts standards, especially in resources provided for elementary grades. In particular, the Music Express Lessons include clear coverage of the national music standards upon which the Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework (2019) is built and are searchable by content and social emotional learning (SEL) alignment. Learning tasks are rigorous and coherent, progressing in complexity to develop students’ artistic literacy and understanding of music intent.

- The Modern Band module allows students to participate authentically in a

performance context and focuses on developing students' understanding of artistic intent. Activities and exercises sequentially develop skills and then consistently apply them to authentic musical contexts through creating, responding, performing, and connecting. For example, students learn about strings first, the proper way to pluck an instrument next, and then connect concepts and skills to artistic intent in the application of a song last. This cyclical routine supports the development of technical skills and eventually adds the option of improvisation changes and composition activities, allowing students to create riffs and chord progressions.

- Additionally, Modern Band featured well-articulated sections on music theory, instrumental skills, and technique and ensemble playing, with each goal clearly aligned to the artistic practices emphasized when playing in a band, and with aligned activities that were grade appropriate.

The World Drumming module includes standards for improvisation and cultural knowledge. The focus of this module was on the “Performing” cluster, with increasing complexity of technical ability and skill. However, there were missed opportunities in this module for developing artistic literacy fully: this module did not consistently focus on students' creative expressions through creating, responding, and connecting.

## **Standards Alignment: Limitations**

Materials in middle school are inconsistently aligned to music content standards and feature little cross-curricular connections.

- Materials would benefit from guidance on how to include background or context on music meaningfully, in ways that are culturally and linguistically sustaining, so that music does not exist in a vacuum. For example, the Modern Band lesson on “Waka-Waka” by Shakira lacked connections to a music video, a discussion on how bodies are differently used in different genres, and acknowledgments of the culture and Fang language from which the music originated.

## **Classroom Application: Strengths**

### ***Student Accessibility:***

The elementary grades and the World Drumming module feature interactive content that engages a variety of modalities and learning styles (e.g., rhythm exercises, scaffolding tips, printable lesson plans). A few modules include side-coaching and performance notes to differentiate instruction.

- There are missed opportunities to include students' identities in ways that are culturally and linguistically sustaining, even though the resource provides some support in this area. For example, the World Drumming module offers:
  - exposure to a wealth of cultural connections,
  - ample resources on the cultural significance of each instrument and how it is used,
  - explanations on the cultural significance of the music, and
  - helpful additional supports such as a pronunciation guide (audio with visuals) so all students, especially multilingual students are learning the right names for instruments and dances.

However, the module rarely makes the next step of connecting explicitly with students' individual identities. Inclusion of students' own cultural and linguistic identities (e.g., "what music uses drumming in your heritage?") would have strengthened the materials significantly.

### ***Teacher Usability:***

The materials are designed to be sensitive to novice music teachers, or those with little prior subject matter knowledge in music.

- The Modern Band module features helpful routines and rehearsal tips, as well as robust Teacher Guides for supporting implementation in a teacher's particular context, including a helpful introduction section with knowledge on different parts of the instrument, safe handling of instruments and look-fors in student

behaviors, as well as corrections to student technique. Guidance is also provided for concrete ways to differentiate components of a song: for example, Modern Band includes “chords that can be approximated by keyboardists/guitarists” if a specific instrument is unavailable in a school’s specific context, as well as “ways to scaffold and make chords easier.”

- Broad resources are provided for effective classroom implementation. For example, the World Drumming module provides full lesson plans, powerpoints, and cultural contexts for ease of use. The World Drumming module included helpful resources such as pronunciation guides (audio with visuals) for students for the learning of the correct names for instruments and dances.
- Materials overall include rubrics and performance guidance for assessment of student learning, particularly in Modern Band. However, these rubrics almost exclusively focus on accuracy of technical performance rather than being inclusive of all artistic practices.

## **Classroom Application: Limitations**

### ***Student Accessibility:***

There is limited support for diverse learners in Modern Band, or when supports are provided, they are provided inconsistently. There is little or no explicit support for students with disabilities or multilingual learners across most of the curriculum.

- Supports for diverse learners are not consistently embedded in the materials. For example, at the end of each Band Song in Modern Band, different suggestions are provided for alternative ways to access the learning or modalities to engage diverse learners. In one instance, teachers are suggested to provide “hand signals for the band,” and encouraged to “come up with their own language of hand signals of when to switch sections” jointly with the students. This provision of kinesthetic engagement supports students who may be hard of hearing or neurodiverse but supports like these occurred on a case-by-case basis, but inconsistently.
- The Modern Band module included a “Games” section under the “Resources” component of the materials, allowing students to learn instruments in

a dynamic, interactive way, practicing with different skills and engaging demonstrations of knowledge. This feature could be highly useful for students with limited language ability. However, most materials feature only verbal/reading/technical learning opportunities, with little to no consistent social emotional learning integration, embodied movement, or accessibility features provided for educators.

- There are missed opportunities for students to experience different artistic roles and groupings. For example, there are only a few chances for students to engage as various types of audience members, or to interact with each other in peer-to-peer formats, or to take part in music production.

### **Teacher Usability:**

Resources vary significantly by unit, with limited pacing guidance, no clear scope or sequence, and sparse exemplars in some areas.

- Materials would benefit from additional teacher guidance for adapting to class contexts and pacing: suggestions for different lengths of music classes, suggested timelines provided for rehearsals, which exercises are essential, or identification of focus skills, would be helpful for supporting teacher implementation.
- For the World Drumming module, while lesson plans are clearly designed, the guidance for teachers lacks time markers and preprogrammed steps to help naturally pace the lesson. For newer teachers or those unfamiliar with the materials, pacing guidance would assist in distributing time effectively: how much to spend on a warm up activity, versus a check for understanding, versus a final unit assessment, etc. Pacing is left up to the educator, making effective implementation challenging.

## **Guitar Module**

*Independent arts educators found a discrepancy between the content and design of the Guitar Module and other materials in Essential Elements Music Class. Because of this variance, this report separates the findings for the Guitar Module*

*below.*

## **Standards Alignment: Limitations**

In the Guitar Module, coverage of the music content standards is limited or sometimes even absent entirely, requiring teachers to check for alignment, adapt the materials, and supplement on their own substantively. Many standards for artistic practices (e.g., creating) are minimally addressed or especially missing. Most materials in the Guitar module focused on compliance and technical skill only in a eurocentric, performance-based model of instruction rather than also addressing artistic practices in creating, responding, and connecting.

## **Classroom Application: Limitations**

### ***Student Accessibility:***

There is limited support for diverse learning styles, especially in the Guitar Module, which focuses mostly on building technical skills in compliance-based exercises versus tasks that celebrate diverse student identities and needs.

- Most materials in the Guitar Module do not consider multiple modalities of learning, featuring only verbal/reading/technical opportunities for access, with little to no consistent social emotional learning integration, or considerations of diverse learners, or accessibility features provided for educators.
- There is little or no explicit support for students with disabilities or multilingual learners across most of the curriculum.
- Additionally, there are missed opportunities for students to experience different artistic roles and groupings. There are few chances for students to engage as various types of audience members, or to interact with each other in peer-to-peer formats, or to take part in music production.

### ***Teacher Usability:***

Resources vary significantly by unit, with limited pacing guidance, no clear scope or sequence progression, and sparse examples to support teacher implementation in some areas.

- In particular, the Guitar module omits rubrics, videos, or deep scaffolding. Many lessons depend on teacher expertise in music and adaptation without adequate support for novice teachers.

# DRAMA TEACHER ACADEMY BY THEATREFOLK 6-12

[Drama Teacher Academy](#) is a paid, digital curriculum resource for grades 6–12 focused on the instruction of theatre. It includes full core curricular materials for middle school and all levels of high school theatre and also provides modules for various aspects of the discipline such as technical theatre, theatre history, and specific technical skills such as improvisation. Drama Teacher Academy also provides supplemental materials like asynchronous toolkits, modules on distance learning, and extensive resources for professional development.

## Overview of Findings

The report below presents findings, including areas of particular strength as well as challenges, of Drama Teacher Academy by TheatreFolk: Grades 6-12.

## Standards Alignment: Strengths

Materials are well aligned to national theatre standards upon which the Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework (2019) is built, and cover drama pedagogy in a logical, coherent manner. Materials are designed to help students master theatrical form and production, as well as build their artistic literacy and understanding of artistic intent with increasing levels of complexity.

- For example, in technical theatre units, students learn about building flats before advancing to tech design, growing their understanding of how to use texture and the color wheel for the stage, in lessons that advance their understanding systemically.
- Activities and assessments often align to key theatrical artistic practices, with materials designed to introduce an idea or concept and then routinely revisit, iterate, and refine on it. For example, structured tasks in Drama 2 assist students in “writing an open scene in A/B/A/B with 10 lines” towards the beginning of Unit 1, and then reinforce student learning of this structure through performing

a Shakespearean monologue, before progressing students to writing their own theatrical piece. With the growth towards self-expression, creation, performance, and critique, students are exposed to increasingly complex levels of artistic literacy.

## **Standards Alignment: Limitations**

Although the materials provide some units on indigenous perspectives, devised theatre, and supports for alternate approaches (e.g., applied theatre, or culturally-rooted practices), the curriculum reflects a predominantly Western lens. There are some missed opportunities to connect meaningfully with other disciplines or bodies of knowledge.

For example, with the literacy overlap and requirement to study plays and playwriting in grades 6-12, there was a missed opportunity to connect with English Language Arts (ELA) learning. The onus is upon the individual theatre educator to make the connection to other content areas themselves.

## **Classroom Application: Strengths**

### ***Student Accessibility:***

Materials are designed to integrate social emotional learning (SEL) and provide a variety of modalities for access, and engage and connect with students, their authentic selves, and their stories.

- Most lessons include direct connections to the CASEL SEL framework. For example, in the Drama One Curriculum, Stage Movement Unit: Self-Awareness, students are to engage in a discussion about stage fright. The activities help students to analyze and think about their emotions and techniques for self-management, building empathy around the experience of stage fright while simultaneously supporting learning that is aligned to the theatre standards.
- Materials are particularly strong when allowing for application of social emotions: for example, Ensemble Building Activities in this same unit targets

the specific SEL skillset and engages group empathy building.

- Materials are particularly strong in building technology into student learning and increasing engagement. The integration of technology activates multiple modalities of learning. For example, the “Elements of Costume Design Day 2, Considerations for Costume Design/ Director’s Concept” utilizes hyperdocs, padlets, paper and crayons, and tablets and phones all within one lesson to illustrate the steps to designing a costume. The exposure to various technologies as well as modes of creative expression allow for student participation from many types of learners.
- Lessons are frequently designed to culminate in a reflection exit ticket or reflection journal activity, giving students multiple opportunities to reflect.

### ***Teacher Usability:***

Materials are clearly designed in an organized layout, including detailed lesson plans, rubrics, explicit pacing guides, and routines for teacher implementation. Toolkits support planning, classroom management, professional development, and student grouping. 75 modules of professional development are provided in a separate resource that theatre teachers can discover through personal exploration.

- Pacing guides are included with each unit that not only include suggested lengths for each lesson, but also how to adjust pacing if an educator’s class length is shorter. This particular feature, often called the “Time Management” section at the beginning of lessons, is very helpful and allows educators to identify focus areas if time is limited.
- Helpful resources assist in implementation in various teacher contexts. For example, in the “Practical Technical Theatre” module, web-based design tools are utilized to support schools that do not have the actual equipment needed to teach technical theatre. This feature links to web-based programs that allow educators to use websites and tools online to demonstrate technical skills if lacking the access to facilities or equipment in their physical classroom or space. This provides guidance and resources for teachers to implement the materials across a broad range of contexts.
- The Professional Learning Communities section provides teachers the

opportunity to engage, connect to a community forum, and deepen their subject matter knowledge of theatre. It features recorded webinars of teachers coming together to discuss contemporary issues in theatre classrooms that bridges the theatre curriculum to instruction.

- The Professional Development Courses section also covers a variety of topics and pedagogical tools such as script analysis, the Laban system, and more, and even includes a Resources Section that helps build teachers' knowledge around a variety of classroom-specific topics as well, such as LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the classroom.

## **Classroom Application: Limitations**

### ***Student Accessibility:***

Attempts at inclusion and social emotional learning are inconsistent. While supplemental resources exist, such as visuals, posters, and SEL-alignment, as well as a LGBTQ+ Inclusion Toolkit and Toolkits for Inclusion, lesson-embedded supports for students with disabilities or diverse learners vary from unit to unit.

- Accessibility tools for multilingual students and students with disabilities (e.g., sentence stems, accommodations for nonverbal expressions, etc.) are mostly absent. Materials mostly assume full mobility and verbal fluency of learners.
- UDL principles are not consistently applied and rubrics tend to focus on effort rather than skill.

### ***Teacher Usability:***

Although rubrics are provided and occasionally feature detailed guidance on implementation and effective evaluation, assessments often prioritize participation and effort over content mastery.

- Occasionally, detailed guidance on evaluation and assessments exist; materials would benefit from consistently providing this level of support. For example, the "Weekly Ensemble Grading Guide" from the Middle School Curriculum covers detailed guidance such as how and when to perform the assessments,

how to jot them down in shorthand during class and then transfer them to the provided rubrics later, and what to do about grading if students are absent from class. There is an entirely separate Teacher's Guide to using this rubric, specifying the measurements of mastery that a novice teacher would find particularly helpful: the "Nitty Gritty of Grading" talks about exactly what or when a student's evaluation would qualify as partial versus does not meet expectations.

- However, most rubrics are focused on effort and participation. For example in the Commedia Unit, the rubric criteria are: "Comprehension, Effort, Personal Connection, and Commitment to Presentation," with only options of "high" or "low" to grade students.

Because of this inconsistency, teachers will need to supplement materials to assess student learning effectively and to address gaps in disciplinary depth.

Many of the teacher resources and related professional development are not embedded in the lessons themselves: the onus is on the individual educator to pursue and align appropriate ways to deepen their subject matter knowledge in theatre.

A blurred photograph of a classroom scene. A teacher is standing at the front, and several students in the foreground have their hands raised, indicating an interactive learning environment. The background shows a whiteboard with letters and a colorful calendar.

# OTHER PROMISING OPTIONS

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## MUSIC

Music Instructional Material(s): evaluated using the Music Baseline Rubric

[QuaverMusic by Quaver Ed](#), a fully digital, standards-aligned, and interactive PreK-8 music curriculum, with a library of over 6,500 culturally diverse and interactive resources.

## THEATRE

Theatre Instructional Material(s): evaluated using the Theatre Baseline Rubric

[DramaWorks!](#) by the Drama Education Network, a curriculum for Creative Drama, Theatre, Literacy, and Arts Integration for teaching K-12 Theatre, available in both print or digital formats.

## DANCE

Dance Instructional Material(s): evaluated using the Dance Baseline Rubric

[National Dance Education Organization](#) NCAS Supplemental Resources provides curriculum maps, sample units, and supplemental resources that address the instruction of the “core elements of dance and choreography (the body and bodily relationships using space, time, and a variety of energies), and improvising and composing dance studies and dances.” While these resources were not core curricular materials, but rather examples of how the standards can be used to create learning experiences and assess student work in K-12, the instructional materials are aligned with content standards and are clearly organized in a way that provides a clear progression of skills and expectations that align with student development over time.

# MEDIA ARTS

Media Instructional Material(s): evaluated using the Media Arts Baseline Rubric

[Youth Media Challenge by KQED.org](#), free online resources that are standards-aligned and intended to bring lesson plans, professional development, and supplemental resources that support middle and high school students in creating media, provided by nonprofit public media station KQED.

The discipline-specific rubric criteria are available in the Appendix for your independent evaluation of the materials above:

Dance Curriculum In-Depth Review Rubric

Media Arts Curriculum In-Depth Review Rubric

Music Curriculum In-Depth Review Rubric

Theatre Curriculum In-Depth Review Rubric

Visual Arts Curriculum In-Depth Review Rubric

If you would like more information on the review process or any reviewed materials, please email [dawn.m.benski@mass.gov](mailto:dawn.m.benski@mass.gov).

*Note to Publishers: If you have curricular materials you would like to submit for review, please email [dawn.m.benski@mass.gov](mailto:dawn.m.benski@mass.gov).*



# APPENDIX





# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**All Students:** The curriculum guide frequently references “all students,” which represents each and every student, with particular focus on students who have been historically marginalized or underserved by our education systems, including but not limited to, those who identify as Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Indigenous, and Multiracial students, students with disabilities, English learners, LGBTQIA+ students, students experiencing homelessness and/or financial insecurity, and students who are undocumented.

**Asset-Based:** Asset-based approaches intentionally build on the strengths and capacities that learners bring to school, including their languages, cultures and experiences versus deficit-based thinking that views differences as weaknesses.

**Bias:** A disproportionate weight that may be created intentionally or unintentionally in favor of or against an idea, thing, individual, or group.

**Core Materials:** Comprehensive print or digital instructional resources designed to serve as the standalone primary materials for Tier 1 instruction. They provide a coherent and sequenced progression of learning aligned to all or a majority of the Massachusetts content standards and practices, while addressing students’ diverse learning needs to enable all students to meet grade-level expectations, as defined by the [Massachusetts curriculum frameworks](#).

**Curricular / Instructional Materials:** Resources teachers use to facilitate

sequences of learning experiences (e.g., lesson and unit plans, texts); also called *adopted* or *written* curriculum.

**Curriculum:** A sequence of student learning experiences teachers facilitate using curricular materials as a foundation (not a script!); also called *enacted* or *taught* curriculum.

**Curriculum Literacy:** The ability of all educators—administrators, coaches, and teachers—to evaluate the alignment and quality of curricular materials through an equity lens; navigate how instructional design supports access and drives student learning; and enact curriculum skillfully by leveraging high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) with integrity to meet the diverse needs of every learner and drive equitable outcomes for all.

**Equity Lens:** A framework for assessing and addressing disparities and supports that include considering marginalized and underserved communities in decision-making processes. When applying an equity lens, decision-makers typically ask a series of questions to guide their analysis and actions, such as: *Does the decision improve, worsen, or maintain existing disparities? Whose voice is represented and whose is missing? What assumptions underlie the decision?*

**High Expectations and Support:** Supporting all students to develop positive identities as learners and attain the academic skills and knowledge to meet or exceed grade-level standards with targeted supports and apply competencies in current relevant, real-world contexts.

**Horizontal Coherence:** The alignment of learning within a single grade level or across different classrooms in the same district. This alignment provides a consistent educational experience regardless of a student's assigned teacher or current subject of study.

**Standards:** The progression of content knowledge and skills students must

master at each grade level to be prepared for college, career, and civic life, as defined by the [Massachusetts curriculum frameworks](#).

**Standards-Aligned:** Attending to the full depth, rigor, and progression of the content standards and practices. Every component of the curriculum—the lessons, the student tasks, the assessments, and the instructional routines—is intentionally built to help students master the specific knowledge and skills defined by the [Massachusetts curriculum frameworks](#).

**Supplemental Materials:** Flexible instructional resources used to support or enhance Tier 1 core instruction. They can be used by students, independently or with a teacher, for targeted purposes, such as: enriching, reinforcing, or extending Tier 1 core learning; addressing gaps in standards coverage within Tier 1 core materials or instruction; and/or providing differentiated learning access points to enable all students to meet or exceed grade-level expectations, as defined by the [Massachusetts curriculum frameworks](#).

**Supplementing/Supplementation:** The act of adding external materials, activities, or lessons to a district-adopted Tier 1 core curriculum. The specific additive adaptation bridges the gap between the written materials and the unique assets and needs of students, supports relevance to local contexts, and maintains rigor of grade-level standards.

**Tier 1:** Within a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework, Tier 1 refers to the core instruction and universal supports provided to **all students**, including students with IEPs and multilingual learners.

**Vertical Coherence:** The deliberate alignment of knowledge, skills, and standards across different grade levels. This structure creates a logical, developmental progression where the curriculum in one year serves as the direct foundation for the next.



# OVERVIEW OF THE ARTS FRAMEWORK GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

The 2019 Massachusetts Framework for the Arts establishes that all Massachusetts students will develop artistic literacy through active participation in the arts, expressing creative ideas with skill, confidence, and artistic intent.

## ***Guiding Principles for Effective Arts Program***

The following principles are philosophical statements that underlie the standards and resources in this Curriculum Framework. They should guide the design and evaluation of arts programs in schools. Programs guided by these principles will prepare students for colleges, careers, and their lives as productive citizens.

### **Guiding Principle 1**

**An effective arts education enables students to become artistically literate.**

Artistic literacy is the knowledge and understanding required to participate authentically in the arts. Fluency in the language(s) of the arts is the ability to create, perform or present, respond, and connect through symbolic and metaphoric forms that are unique to the arts. It is embodied in specific philosophical foundations and lifelong goals that enable an artistically literate person to transfer arts knowledge, skills, and capacities to other subjects, settings, and contexts.

As a society, we need to embrace the model that continued experience leads to learning in arts, just as it does in other valued subjects, like mathematics,

science, history, and language study. Arts are our human birthright—every culture throughout time and across the globe has them. They are another way of knowing, and at least as valuable as any other subject in understanding the world. As opposed to being the purview of the talented few, the arts are essential throughout everyone’s lives for understanding and appreciation, expression, social and emotional well-being, and creative opportunity.

To give every individual the opportunity to live a life enriched by artistic engagement fueled by competence and confidence, this *2019 Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework* identifies explicitly how artistic literacy is acquired and developed in Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts.

## **Guiding Principle 2**

**An effective arts education develops students’ understanding of the concept of artistic intent.**

Arts programs should focus on helping students create or perform work guided by thoughtful and intentional decision-making. Likewise, students should understand that an analysis or critique of a work of art considers artistic intent. A high-quality arts education program keeps artistic intent central by ensuring student analytical and aesthetic thinking, opportunities to share work, and conversations.

What does a classroom look like when a teacher focuses on developing artistic intent? Imagine a kindergarten teacher who inspires students to have an aesthetic response to a snowy day. The children go outside, observe the rhythms of falling snow, examine the geometry of snowflakes, hear the snow crunch beneath their boots, feel the chill and wetness of melting snow through their mittens. Back inside, children talk about the different ways they perceived snow before choosing art materials to express their own ideas of experiencing snow. The

images are all likely to be different, each informed by an individual child's desire to communicate what he or she saw, heard, or felt. The classroom gallery becomes a vibrant space as children discuss the intention behind their work (e.g., "I wanted to show how snow swirls" "I wanted to show how I shiver when it's cold").

The young child who learns that making art is purposeful creative work has taken the first step to becoming an artist and comprehending the power of the arts to inspire creative expression. As President John F. Kennedy wrote, "If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him. We must never forget that art is not a form of propaganda; it is a form of truth..."

### **Guiding Principle 3**

#### **An effective arts education fosters a coherent and rigorous progression of learning.**

Each lesson of an arts program should build upon previous lessons to create a coherent progression of learning. This framework presents the artistic processes of creating, presenting/performing, responding, and connecting from the National Core Arts Standards in 11 Standards of Artistic Practice that are applicable to all the grades. It also includes Content Standards that specify what students should know and be able to do in the arts disciplines at various points in their school experience. The Content Standards and Practice Standards are designed to be used together to connect knowledge, skills, and practices that build into a coherent, sequential, and rigorous program. Using the structure of Content and Practice Standards, educators express their own creativity in choosing resources and materials to implement aligned lessons, units, and assessments in creating a coherent program that builds on the learning from previous lessons and units to promote the development of students' artistic literacy.

## **Guiding Principle 4**

### **An effective arts education is relevant to students' interests.**

We live in a world full of music, images, words, and movement. Most students already have deep and personal relationships with the arts—they are apt to have passionate opinions about favorite musicians or actors. A high-quality arts program supports educators in becoming familiar with the popular art forms students already value and makes authentic efforts to include these genres and styles where appropriate, not just as a strategy for engagement, but as legitimate forms of contemporary expression. Teaching with students' interests in mind might mean assignments in which students design their own superhero figures, compose a musical hook, research the interaction of social movements and visual memes, or perform spoken word poems with a distinctive contemporary beat.

This guiding principle is challenging. What engages students one year may not interest students the following year. Educators need not become experts in every emerging art form, but they should become skilled at helping students understand how to express themselves in ways that are most authentic to them.

## **Guiding Principle 5**

**An effective arts education provides students with broad and frequent access to great works of art from the past and present, across genres, time periods, and styles, and represents diverse cultures in the United States and from around the world in order to develop an appreciation for the richness of artistic expression, understand the connections between art and history, and cultivate one's own sense of beauty.**

Encouraging students' artistic interests and their need for self-expression should be complemented by an introduction to enduring art from a wide variety of

perspectives and cultures throughout history. Although “beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” great works of art not only reflect technical mastery, they also make visceral connections with their audience. Great art can inspire or provoke; it can reveal hidden truths or awaken the imagination; it can engender joy or sadness; it can produce serenity or awe. Regardless of their subject or form, accomplished works of art can communicate intellectually and emotionally in ways that are powerful and moving, and uniquely human.

In order to recognize the beauty and impact of art, students at all grade levels must have regular opportunities to experience important works of art, appropriate to their age. In doing so, they will also learn about the artistic techniques and aesthetic sensibilities that can help them to develop their own distinctive perspective and voice.

The arts from all over the world are an important part of our complex heritage. Integration of the arts and the history and social science curricula can help students understand the scope and breadth of human history, while at the same time providing a basis for understanding the context and themes of artworks that have become historical and cultural touchstones. For example, in the Grade 1 standards of the History and Social Science Framework, students look at the meaning of symbols in the lyrics of American songs such as “America the Beautiful.” This is an opportunity for collaboration between the music and history/social science educators. In the course of a well-designed pre-K to grade 12 arts program, arts curriculum designers have tremendous opportunities to motivate students to explore and perform works from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, as well as Europe and the Americas.

The twenty-first-century classroom and workplace includes people from diverse cultures and experiences and perspectives who must learn and work together. To be college and career ready, students need to understand and appreciate other perspectives and cultures. One way in which students learn about views different from their own is through the examination and performance of artistic works from varying cultures, historical periods, and genres. Deep study of works of art from around the world helps students become aware of how their own culture shapes attitudes and aesthetic values.

Studying a wide range of art forms helps students understand cultural allusions that they will encounter elsewhere in conversation and study. For example, the student who has discussed Salvador Dali's 1931 painting, "The Persistence of Memory," will recognize its melting clocks and bleak landscape as examples of surrealist imagery. Students who have performed and learned about a variety of musical styles will hear how composer/lyricist Lin-Manuel Miranda has incorporated musical elements from hip-hop, rhythm and blues, pop, soul, and show tunes into the musical *Hamilton*.

## **Guiding Principle 6**

**In effective arts education programs, students have the opportunity to experience different artistic roles, groupings, and uses of media.**

In addition to exposure to a variety of genres and styles, students should learn about many different kinds of work artists do and the different media they use. This will mean different things for different disciplines. Students should have experiences in different roles such as that of a dancer or choreographer in dance, or a stage manager or costume designer in theatre. Students should explore different instruments in music, produce a range of interactive or design projects, or use an array of visual arts media in both two- and three-dimensional work. This guiding principle is particularly important in the elementary and middle grades. By high school, especially in advanced courses, it is appropriate for students to focus on deep mastery of a particular role or medium, whether it is playing the flute, lighting a theatrical production, sculpting in wood, painting, or animating a short film.

Across the arts program students should have a wide range of experiences working independently and with different size groups. For example, in visual art classes where students usually work independently, educators can design small and large collaborative group projects that reflect how contemporary professional artists complete major works and installations. In music and dance programs where students usually perform as large group ensembles, educators explore opportunities for small group and solo performance opportunities.

## **Guiding Principle 7**

**An effective arts education makes connections with other disciplines and bodies of knowledge.**

**An effective arts curriculum provides opportunities for students to make connections among the arts, with other academic subjects, and with arts resources in the community.** Arts Integration is a method of teaching and learning that links curricular content with artistic discipline, creative expression, and individual inquiry. Consulting the grade-level and course topics and standards in the *Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering, Mathematics, English Language Arts and Literacy, History and Social Science, Digital Literacy and Computer Science, Foreign Languages and Comprehensive Health Frameworks* helps arts teachers find opportunities for collaborating with teachers of these subjects. Creative exploration helps students find personal connections to content knowledge, enhances comprehension, and develops students' point of view, making academic content compelling and memorable.

Connecting the arts to other disciplines sets the expectation that students will learn about their artistic heritage. They will investigate the historical and cultural contexts of the arts, learn about the arts in their communities, and use their knowledge of the arts in the study of other disciplines.

## **Guiding Principle 8**

**An effective arts education promotes family and community engagement.**

In order for students to have authentic opportunities to share their artistic work, effective arts education programs create opportunities to engage with families and the community. Family members often have arts backgrounds to share with students. Local artists and performers, museums, performance spaces, cultural organizations, and arts-related businesses can also contribute to the richness of a school or district arts program. In particular, there should be opportunities for music, theatre, and dance

students to perform for families and the community and for visual and media arts students to exhibit their work beyond the school community.

## **Guiding Principle 9**

### **An effective arts education supports social and emotional growth.**

Students develop their social and emotional skills through every subject. The arts are unique because they offer so many opportunities for students to lead others and to practice collaboration. The arts also help students develop their own self-awareness, confidence, and persistence. In doing so, the arts help to deepen respect for others' ideas, cultures, and perspectives. For example, actors develop empathy when they assume roles of characters whose personalities and situations are markedly different from their own. Group performances require cooperation, concentration, listening to colleagues. The thrill of an excellent performance boosts self-confidence. Former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan observed that diverse artistic experiences foster flexibility: "The arts can help students become tenacious, team-oriented problem solvers who are confident and able to think creatively."

Performing and exhibiting artistic work also requires a level of bravery. Psychologist Dr. Carol Dweck of Stanford University, who studies motivation, personality, and development, says the belief that success in the arts is based on talent, rather than effort, leads to thinking that "arts are for some." In contrast, Dweck's "incremental" model proposes that learning results from effort, hence that "arts are for all." Everyone has the capacity to learn any subject at any time, if they have the opportunity to study with a capable teacher and are motivated to learn. As in any subject, all students learn the arts at their own rate. Most accomplish proficiency, and quite a few even reach mastery levels in a given art form.

## **Guiding Principle 10**

### **An effective arts education program is inclusive; all students participate and benefit.**

Effective arts programs provide the necessary supports for all students to meet the standards. The standards allow for the widest possible range of students to fully engage and benefit from the outset with appropriate accommodations as needed while taking into account that not all participants engage in the same manner. Inclusive arts education programs are based in the philosophy that all students can and have the right to express themselves in and through the arts. Such programs ensure maximum participation of students with disabilities, English learners, students with minimal experience with the arts, and students who have completed advanced arts training. In the arts, as in any other academic subject, some students may require assistive technologies, others may need more time, practice, or individual help. Regardless, all students must feel welcome in the arts studio, in the practice room, on the stage, or at an exhibition and valued for their artistic insights.

## ***Artistic Practices***

The Standards for Artistic Practice describe the processes and skills students learn as practitioners throughout the elementary, middle, and high school years in order to achieve artistic literacy. Based on the processes presented in the 2014 National Core Arts Standards (NCAS), these practices are grouped into four clusters that focus on creating, presenting/performing, responding, and connecting across the five arts disciplines (dance, media arts, music, theatre, visual art).

**Cluster 1: Creating with artistic intent.** Artistically literate students generate, organize, and refine artistic ideas using a variety of strategies and tools to serve an intended purpose for their artistic work.

### **Practice 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.**

Through exploration, students generate a wide variety of innovative ideas while expanding the boundaries of connection, style, genre, or medium.

### **Practice 2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.**

Using a myriad of tools (e.g., brainstorming, sketches, outlines), students plan and organize their ideas to best support their artistic intent.

**Practice 3. Refine and complete artistic work.**

Through a variety of strategies (e.g., teacher or peer feedback, exploration, research, self-reflection), students conceive and revise their artistic ideas to better express, evoke, or communicate their artistic intent.

**Cluster 2: Presenting or performing artistic works to evoke, express, or**

**communicate.** Artistically literate students share their creations with an audience or viewers to evoke, express, or communicate an intended purpose or meaning. They recognize choices and make improvements within their own work or performance aligned with their artistic intent.

**Practice 4. Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.**

When performing work written by others, students interpret the creator's script or score to convey the artist's intention. When sharing their own work, students reflect on how their performance or presentation best supports their artistic intent.

**Practice 5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.**

Through the practice and development of technical skills, and the refining of details, students polish a work for presentation.

**Practice 6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.**

Through the presentation of an artistic work, students successfully evoke, express, or communicate the artistic intent.

**Cluster 3: Responding to arts through intellect and emotion.** Artistically literate students regularly analyze and evaluate their own and others' works of art, including the work of peers and important artwork from varied historical periods and cultures. These students understand that artistic intent is profoundly intertwined with an artist's cultural milieu, and they use this understanding to guide their own reactions to works of art. Learning to appreciate artistic works is a lifelong cumulative experience. It is fostered through repeated performing, listening, looking, reading, and by pondering questions such as What did the artist mean to convey? Why has this work of art endured? What makes a work of art significant to its time and place?

**Practice 7. Perceive and analyze artistic work.**

Through observation of a completed work or exploration of the creative process, students understand how aspects of the artwork, such as the elements and principles of design, support the creator's intent.

**Practice 8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.**

Through observation, discussion, or research, students reflect on an artistic work to discern what it evokes, expresses, or communicates to them.

**Practice 9. Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.**

Students evaluate an artwork's effectiveness at evoking, expressing, or communicating artistic intent using either self-, group-, teacher-, or externally created criteria.

**Cluster 4: Connecting the arts to the self, society, history, culture, and other disciplines and bodies of knowledge.** Artistically literate students discern connections between personal, societal, historical, and cultural contexts as well as multi-disciplinary knowledge when they reflect upon, interpret, respond to, and create artwork. These students understand that diverse forces influence how they view their own artwork as well as the art of others. As artistically literate people, they recognize the powerful influence and impact of the arts on society, history, and culture, as well as their own lives.

**Practice 10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.**

Students draw from their personal and artistic experiences and their multi-disciplinary knowledge when envisioning and creating original art works that reflect their own artistic identity.

**Practice 11. Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, historical, and cultural contexts to deepen understanding.**

Students can articulate how societal, historical, and cultural forces have influenced artistic works, styles and genres, and vice versa.



# CURRICULUM REVIEW PROCESS

Aligned to the DESE Educational Vision, high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) provide a strong foundation for all students, particularly students from historically underserved groups and communities to access learning at grade level (or beyond). HQIM also supports teachers to do what they do best: make learning real world, relevant, and interactive for their students while also providing evidence-based practices that are inclusive and culturally and linguistically sustaining, to cultivate deeper learning.

As a part of the Curriculum Matters: IMplement MA initiative, DESE is committed to providing information about curricular materials that are of quality to schools and districts. This process is necessary for content areas lacking national resources that support HQIM identification. Previous landscape analyses have been conducted for PK-12 Digital Literacy and Computer Science, K-12 History and Social Science, and PK-12 Comprehensive Health and Physical Education. To further this initiative, DESE initiated a landscape analysis of PK-12 Arts curricular materials.

In 2024, DESE conducted a study in partnership with the Research Making Change (RMC) Corporation, a third-party, independent research organization. The RMC study focused on understanding the state of the 2019 Arts Curriculum Framework's implementation nearly five years after its release and provided information on supports needed to implement the framework effectively. The report, [\*The Arts Matter in Massachusetts \(2024\)\*](#) found:

- Up to 40% of “teachers, school arts lead/teachers, and district arts leads” cited

that their “Current curriculum materials do not align to the Framework;”

- Up to 59% of “Teachers, School Arts Lead/Teachers, and District Arts Leads” view “guidance on how to apply the Framework to real life lessons” as barrier to their instruction,
- 68% of survey respondents cited concerns with “ensur[ing] lessons maximize participation from all students, including students with disabilities and English learners,” and that
- “Many [teachers]...wished that there was a similar type of resource [as DESE coordinating the CURATE website with information for English language arts, mathematics, and science teacher] for the arts... (p.24).”

In response to this surfaced need, DESE contracted with the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy to conduct a landscape review of arts curricular materials. Materials were identified for the landscape analysis based on a survey of Massachusetts educators and an independent search of curricular resources by Rennie Center staff. Identified materials then passed through evaluation in three phases, with only materials passing each phase proceeding to the next:

### **Step 1: A Pre-Screening Checklist conducted by Rennie Center**

- a. The pre-screening is composed of a Yes/No checklist of the following criteria:
  1. Covers at least a semester of instruction or 3 units per grade level
  2. Has a Teacher Guide
  3. Provides Student Materials
  4. Shows Cumulative Demonstration of Learning

### **Step 2: A Baseline Review conducted by an independent art educator + Rennie Center staff**

- b. A rubric was modeled off of the CUrriculum RATings by TEachers (CURATE) Project, which evaluates materials that have previously been reviewed for alignment to college- and career-ready standards. It is intended for a baseline

review of instructional materials in the arts that have not already been screened for some degree of standards alignment.

### **Step 3: An In-Depth Review conducted by panels of art educators**

- c. Review additional information about arts discipline-specific In-Depth Review Rubrics below.



# CURRICULUM REVIEW RUBRIC STRUCTURE AND DEFINITIONS OF RATINGS

Modeled off of the [CUrriculum RATings by TEachers \(CURATE\) rubrics](#), the Arts Rubrics are designed for use by arts expert advisors to evaluate core **curricular materials** for the five disciplines (dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts). They may also be used by educators in other contexts.

**Core curricular materials** are comprehensive resources designed for use with all students to access grade level content and standards in a given class over the course of a year or semester. Through the use of the Arts Rubrics, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) aims to elevate curricular materials that are high-quality. DESE defines **high-quality instructional materials (HQIM)** as being aligned to Massachusetts content and practice standards, being culturally responsive, and exhibiting a coherent sequence of target skills, instructional practices, and understandings. In addition, high-quality materials are accessible for all students, including students with disabilities, students working above and below grade level, multilingual learners, and students of color.

Although materials may be rated “high-quality” this does not mean they are perfect. Materials rely on the skillful implementation of teachers who need to consider their local contexts and student needs. The Arts Rubrics evaluate the content of the materials but **do not and are not intended** to measure implementation or professional learning associated with the use of the curricular materials. Schools or districts should also consider their local priorities and their student and teacher needs when analyzing materials since the challenges reported

may impact districts differently.

### **Guidelines for Review**

- Review and document all evidence before deciding on ratings.
- Consider quantity as well as quality of evidence for each indicator.
- Consider evidence of high quality as well as evidence of low quality.
- Do not feel compelled to weigh each indicator and criterion equally.
- Do not consider the provided examples to be exhaustive or restrictive.
- If evidence is lacking for an indicator, flag it for further data collection.

## **RUBRIC STRUCTURE**

### **Domain: Standards Alignment**

1. **Criterion:** Coherence & Organization
2. **Criterion:** Classroom Tasks & Instruction

### **Domain: Classroom Application**

1. **Criterion:** Accessibility for Students
2. **Criterion:** Usability for Educators

## **DEFINITIONS OF RATINGS**

- Meets Expectations: Most or all evidence indicates high quality; little to none indicates low quality. Materials may not be perfect, but Massachusetts educators and students would be well served and strongly supported by them.
- Partially Meets Expectations: Some evidence indicates high quality, while some indicates low quality. Evidence may suggest that not all components are evident. Educators in Massachusetts would benefit from having these materials but would need to supplement or adapt them substantively to serve their students well.
- Does Not Meet Expectations: Little to no evidence indicates high quality; most or all evidence indicates low quality. Materials would not substantively

help Massachusetts educators and students meet the state's expectations for teaching and learning.



# VISUAL ARTS CURRICULUM REVIEW RUBRIC (IN-DEPTH)

## Standards Alignment

### 1. **Criterion:** Coherence & Organization

**a. Indicator:** Instructional materials are aligned to content standards by grade levels.

- Materials are aligned to the expectations for artistic practices by their grade levels.
- Lesson objectives and tasks are aligned to Massachusetts content standards (even if they are labeled for a different grade).
- Materials, including texts and/or graphic sources, address content standards with an appropriate level of depth and complexity for the intended grade dyad.
- Content presented is factually accurate and reflects current scholarship.
- The progression from previous units and to future units supports full coverage of the standards for content and expectations for artistic practices by their grade levels (Guiding Principles 1 and 2).

**b. Indicator:** Instructional materials articulate a coherent and rigorous progression of learning that builds through each unit to support the development of students' artistic intent and technical skills.

- Artistic intent is the meaning the artist intended in a work, so far as it can be determined from the artist's statements and/or cultural context.
- Materials move students towards applying learned skills in visual arts to express conceptualised thoughts and creative ideas.
- Materials are designed to build students' knowledge and skills over time. (Guiding Principle 3).

- Materials and technical concepts and skills are appropriate to the range of child development (Guiding Principles 1 and 2).

**c. Indicator:** Instructional materials support students' abilities to build their artistic literacy with increasing levels of complexity.

- Artistic literacy is the ability to participate authentically in the arts through creating, performing or presenting, responding, and connecting.
- Lessons and units build on previous understanding and prior knowledge, using this to connect content and concepts within and across grades and courses.
- Students have repeated opportunities to apply content standards and artistic literacy over time.

**d. Indicator:** Instructional materials promote meaningful connections with other disciplines, bodies of knowledge, and students' authentic, cultural, and linguistic identities.

- Materials support students' authentic engagement by providing opportunities to create/produce/present their works to peers, family, community, and in other spaces.
- Materials connect students' artwork to increasingly complex understandings and experiences of art in their community and interdisciplinary societal, cultural, and historical contexts.
- Materials provide opportunities to learn about and appreciate culturally diverse artists and artworks.
- Materials weave in dance, music, and theatre content and vocabulary to support and scaffold instruction and promote cross-curricular learning that aids visual arts skills development and reflection.
- Materials support students in exploring, expressing, and reflecting on their intersecting personal, cultural, and social identities through meaningful visual arts experiences.

## **2. Criterion:** Classroom Tasks & Instruction

**a. Indicator:** Learning tasks are articulated, measurable, and grade-appropriate.

- Tasks consistently engage students in age-appropriate artistic practices,

including one or more\*of the following:

- a diversity of discipline-specific, age-appropriate sources (e.g., texts, images, performances, and artistic statements).
- discipline-specific, age-appropriate tasks that ask students to reflect for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- discipline-specific, age-appropriate listening and speaking tasks that ask students to engage in active listening and academic discourse.
- Tasks are related to the stated learning objectives, and students understand what they are expected to do (Guiding Principle 6).

**b. Indicator:** Tasks cover a variety of modalities.

- A variety of modalities could include opportunities for students to demonstrate learning through both individual and group activities, so students who thrive in one context but struggle in another aren't only being assessed in one way, or could include writing, group discussions, etc.
- Tasks give students opportunities in visual arts to develop their understanding of a range of traditional and innovative techniques and processes through experimentation of varied mediums.

**c. Indicator:** Tasks clearly work to support students in demonstrating their learning in visual arts.

- There are both formative and summative opportunities for students to understand the expectations to create, present, respond, or connect (to peers, audience, or themselves) in ways that are grade appropriate.
- Tasks give students opportunities in visual arts to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills through interactive and iterative art making processes, and perceive or analyze artistic work in culturally responsive ways through self expression.

## Classroom Application

**1. Criterion:** Accessibility for Students

**a. Indicator:** Materials provide multimodal ways for students to access the content and demonstrate learning, helping teachers meet students' diverse needs.

- Explicit supports and scaffolding for students with disabilities and multilingual students; diverse approaches to engagement; explicit supports or modifications using CLSP for students with diverse identities and needs.
- The materials take into account students with diverse identities in its instructional design, creating different access points, modified materials, or even scaffolded materials (Guiding Principles 4, 10).
- Multimodal ways it encompasses inclusive opportunities to address levels of child development and physical movement (e.g. suggestions for alternative artistic tools, such as adaptive paint brushes, or alternative mark-making and problem-solving techniques in the art-making process).
- This could also include adaptive opportunities to explore and experiment with multi-media (visual, audio, etc.) supports, or translations.

**b. Indicator:** Instructional materials contain multimodal opportunities for all students, including those with diverse needs, to develop their social emotional skills.

- Explicit supports and scaffolding for students with disabilities and multilingual students; diverse approaches to engagement; explicit supports or modifications using CLSP for students with diverse identities and needs.
- The materials consider students with diverse identities by creating broad and frequent access to artwork (Guiding Principles 2, 5, 7 and 9).
- The materials include opportunities to reflect upon, communicate, and develop students' understanding of artistic intent, and to explore their relationality to peers and the surrounding community, and self-reflective processes.
  - This could also include varied opportunities for reflective and/or collaborative projects that promote self-expression and/or collaboration to promote social-emotional skill development (e.g., self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making skills, and social awareness).

**c. Indicator:** Instructional materials contain a variety of culturally and linguistically sustaining opportunities for all students to communicate their own artistic intents and growth within the visual arts discipline.

- Explicit supports and scaffolding for students with disabilities and

multilingual students; diverse approaches to engagement; explicit supports or modifications using CLSP for students with diverse identities and needs.

- Materials prompt connections between classroom learning and students' identities, families, and/or communities outside of school.
  - Thoughtful considerations of student choice and voice are included.
  - Materials consider the diverse identities of students, and opportunities for artistic experiences that are meaningfully and authentically connected to their lives, identities, and communities are given (Guiding Principle 4, 6, 8, 9, 10).
  - Students are encouraged and supported to share diverse cultural visual examples from their own lives into the classroom through discussion, artifacts, and/or interest.

## **2. Criterion:** Usability for Teachers

**a. Indicator:** Instructional materials support teachers with suggested classroom routines and structures in ways that broaden student experiences to different artistic roles and groupings.

- Materials include suggestions and instructions about routines such as set-up of an artistic space; information about expected student behavior, especially regarding the usage of artistic tools; and suggested classroom mapping instructions.
- There are considerations about structures (e.g., grouping strategies in ensemble classes) and protocols (e.g. expectations around giving and receiving feedback from peers).

**b. Indicator:** Instructional materials include rubrics, exemplars, and guidance to set high expectations around presentation/performance/production. There are assessments that help teachers measure learning in authentic and meaningful ways.

- Arts assessments serve as meaningful demonstrations of learning and authentic expressions of students' artistic intent, whether through self-reflection or by creating, performing, and connecting with an external audience (Guiding Principles 1, 2, 4, 9, and 10).

- Authentic and meaningful assessments could include formative as well as cumulative measurements of learning, formal and informal tasks (e.g., peer feedback, exit tickets, checks for understandings), opportunities for co-creation (e.g., opportunities for student co-construction of assessment criteria, especially around larger time scale projects to build student ownership and voice), and should stretch beyond only student behavior, such as effort or task completion.
- Assessments could serve to uncover misunderstandings and areas for growth by offering feedback on the mastery of specific artistic techniques.
- Materials provide teacher guidance toward next steps based on assessment data (e.g., reteaching, reassessing, continued practice). Helpful identifications could include structured ways to intervene with common student challenges.

**c. Indicator:** Pacing is reasonable and flexible; the curriculum can be implemented within the grade level, and provides guidance or resources to support implementation in a teacher’s particular context.

- Teacher guidance is approachable and clear, and may even consider accommodations for teacher absences or educator talent changes in the program.
- Instructional time for the arts varies greatly based upon local context; considerations for this have been included in order to expand or contract, by keeping the most essential elements intact.
- Access to artistic tools or resources such as space, technology, and materials have also been considered for different teaching contexts (e.g. lack of paintbrushes and alternative print-making options).

**d. Indicator:** Instructional materials include guidance and resources such as ones designed specifically to build teachers’ subject matter knowledge in the visual arts discipline.

- This could include opportunities to connect with meaningful communities of practice, or guidance and resources for professional development.
- Materials could include supports for teachers in promoting and considering their students’ self-expressions; connections to further resources in the district or the community; as well as guidance to practice culturally and linguistically

sustaining instruction in the arts.



# MEDIA ARTS CURRICULUM REVIEW RUBRIC (IN-DEPTH)

## Standards Alignment

### 1. **Criterion:** Coherence & Organization

**a. Indicator:** Instructional materials are aligned to the standards for content by their grade levels.

- Materials are aligned to the expectations for artistic practices by their grade levels.
- Lesson objectives and tasks are aligned to Massachusetts content standards (even if they are labeled for a different grade).
- Materials, including texts, media sources (images and sound, technology, interactivity, etc.), and/or graphic sources (photographs, drawings, symbols, graphs, charts, etc.), address content standards with an appropriate level of depth and complexity for the intended grade dyad.
- Content presented is factually accurate and reflects current industry practices and evolving technologies.
- Materials consider current tools, design thinking, multimedia communications (all multimedia production, such as non-linear video games, digital sound and music production, interactive websites, and virtual reality), artistic genres, and ethical practices (especially around the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the arts) in media arts.
- The progression from previous units and to future units supports full coverage of the standards for content and expectations for artistic practices by their grade levels (Guiding Principles 1 and 2).

**b. Indicator:** Instructional materials articulate a coherent and rigorous progression

of learning that builds through each unit to develop students' artistic intent and technical skills.

- Artistic intent is the meaning the artist intended in a work, so far as it can be determined from the artist's statements or cultural context.
- Materials move students towards applying learned skills to express conceptualised thoughts and creative ideas. This may include storyboarding, animation, digital photography, audio editing, or website design.
- Materials are designed to build students' knowledge and skills over time. (Guiding Principle 3)
- Materials and technical concepts and skills are appropriate to the range of child development (Guiding Principles 1 and 2).

**c. Indicator:** Instructional materials support students' abilities to build their artistic literacy with increasing levels of complexity.

- Artistic literacy is the ability to participate authentically in the arts through creating, presenting, responding, and connecting.
- Lessons and units build on previous understanding and prior knowledge, using this to connect content and concepts within and across grades and courses.
- Students have repeated opportunities to apply content standards and artistic literacy over time.
- Consider how students generate and organize artistic ideas, revise projects, and reflect on their artistic intent using digital platforms, various tools, software, and media art processes for creation and communication.

**d. Indicator:** Instructional materials promote meaningful connections with other disciplines, bodies of knowledge, and students' authentic, cultural, and linguistic identities.

- Materials facilitate students' authentic engagement in analyzing, producing and applying learning, enabling them to create, present, respond, and connect their works meaningfully with peers, family, the community, and other contexts.
- Materials connect students' artwork to increasingly complex understandings and experiences of art in their community and interdisciplinary societal,

cultural, historic, and technological contexts.

- For media arts, technological contexts should expose students to analyses of both analogue and digital visual arts, allowing them to explore traditional and technological tools that govern the skill and speed in each case.
- Materials provide opportunities to learn about and appreciate culturally diverse artists and artworks.
- Materials weave in dance, music, and theatre content and vocabulary to support and scaffold instruction and promote cross-curricular learning that aids media arts skills development and reflection.
- Materials support students in exploring, expressing, and reflecting on their intersecting personal, cultural, and social identities through meaningful media arts experiences.

## **2. Criterion:** Classroom Tasks & Instruction

**a. Indicator:** Learning tasks are articulated, measurable, and grade-appropriate.

- Tasks consistently engage students in age-appropriate media art practices, including one or more\*of the following:
  - a diversity of discipline-specific, age-appropriate sources (e.g., images, graphics, and artistic statements).
  - discipline-specific, age-appropriate tasks that ask students to reflect for a variety of purposes and audiences.
  - discipline-specific, age-appropriate listening and speaking tasks that ask students to engage in active listening and academic discourse.
  - the vocabulary, media forms (animation, video, digital spaces, etc.), and student roles appropriate to the grade level dyad for media arts.
- Tasks are related to the stated learning objectives and move students' understanding of what they are expected to do (Guiding Principle 6).

**b. Indicator:** Tasks cover a variety of modalities.

- A variety of modalities could include opportunities for students to demonstrate learning through both individual and group activities, so students who thrive in one context but struggle in another aren't only being assessed in one way, or could include writing, group discussions, etc.

- Tasks give students opportunities in media arts to:
  - explore both established and emerging technologies
  - experiment with producing desired results from digital tools, coding, mixed media, and other forms of interactivity.

**c. Indicator:** Tasks clearly work to support students in demonstrating their learning in media arts.

- There are both formative and summative opportunities for students to understand the expectations to create, present, respond, or connect (to peers, audience, or themselves) in ways that are grade appropriate.
- Tasks include authentic products (e.g., digital portfolio, website design, podcast, video), reflective artist statements, and rubrics.
- Tasks give students opportunities in media arts to refine critical thinking and problem-solving skills through iterative art making processes, and perceive or analyze artistic work in culturally responsive ways.

## Classroom Application

### 1. Criterion: Accessibility for Students

**a. Indicator:** Materials provide multimodal ways for students to access the content and demonstrate learning, helping teachers meet students' diverse needs.

- Explicit supports and scaffolding for students with disabilities and multilingual students; diverse approaches to engagement; explicit supports or modifications using CLSP for students with diverse identities and needs.
- The materials take into account students with diverse identities in its instructional design, creating different access points, modified materials, or even scaffolded materials (Guiding Principles 4, 10).
- This could also include inclusive opportunities to explore and experiment with multi-media (text-to-speech, visual, audio, etc.) supports, or translations.

**b. Indicator:** Instructional materials contain multimodal opportunities for all students, including those with diverse needs, to develop their social-emotional skills.

- Explicit supports and scaffolding for students with disabilities and

multilingual students; diverse approaches to engagement; explicit supports or modifications using CLSP for students with diverse identities and needs.

- The materials consider students with diverse identities by creating broad and frequent access to artwork (Guiding Principles 2, 5, 7 and 9).
- This could include opportunities to reflect upon, communicate, and develop their understanding of artistic intent, relationality to peers and the surrounding community, and self-reflective processes.

**c. Indicator:** Instructional materials contain a variety of culturally and linguistically sustaining opportunities for all students to communicate their own artistic intents and growth within the media arts disciplines.

- Explicit supports and scaffolding for students with disabilities and multilingual students; diverse approaches to engagement; explicit supports or modifications using CLSP for students with diverse identities and needs.
  - This may include stop-motion animation or animation; storyboards, oral presentations, podcasts, interactive galleries, and video essays.
- Materials prompt connections between classroom learning and students' identities, families, and/or communities outside of school.
  - Thoughtful considerations of student choice and voice are included.
  - The materials consider the diverse identities of students and give them artistic experiences that are meaningfully connected to their diverse lives, identities, and communities. (Guiding Principle 4, 6, 8, 9, 10).
  - Students are encouraged and supported to share diverse cultural media examples from their own lives into the classroom through discussion, artifacts, and/or interest.

## **2. Criterion:** Usability for Teachers

**a. Indicator:** Instructional materials support teachers with suggested classroom routines and structures in ways that broaden student experiences to different artistic roles and groupings.

- Materials include suggestions and instructions about routines such as setting up labs and managing digital tools or software, and expectations, particularly concerning the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in their work.

- Materials outline effective organization of classroom spaces to enhance both creating and learning, which includes classroom mapping instructions.
- Materials provide guidance and instructions regarding routines, protocols (e.g. expectations around giving and receiving feedback from peers), and collaboration expectations (e.g. behavioral guidance for working in pairs, groups, or individually).

**b. Indicator:** Instructional materials include rubrics, exemplars, and guidance to set high expectations encompassing digital literacy skills: technical, communication, and artistic skills for production and presentation. There are assessments that help teachers measure learning in authentic and meaningful ways.

- Arts assessments serve as meaningful demonstrations of learning and authentic expressions of students' artistic intent, whether through self-reflection or by creating, performing, and connecting with an external audience (Guiding Principles 1, 2, 4, 9, and 10).
- Authentic and meaningful assessments could include formative as well as cumulative measurements of learning, formal and informal tasks (e.g., peer feedback, exit tickets, checks for understandings), opportunities for co-creation (e.g., opportunities for student co-construction of assessment criteria, especially around larger time scale projects to build student ownership and voice), and should stretch beyond only student behavior, such as effort or task completion.
- Assessments could help identify students' misconceptions and gaps in knowledge when demonstrating mastery of specific artistic techniques.
- Materials provide teacher guidance toward next steps based on assessment data (e.g., reteaching, reassessing, continued practice). Helpful identifications could include structured ways to intervene with common student challenges.

**c. Indicator:** Pacing is reasonable and flexible; the curriculum can be implemented within the grade level, and provides guidance or resources to support implementation in a teacher's particular context.

- Teacher guidance is approachable and clear and may even consider accommodations for teacher absences or educator talent changes in the program.

- Instructional time for the arts varies greatly based upon local context; considerations for this have been included in order to expand or contract, by keeping the most essential elements intact.
- Access to artistic tools or resources such as space, technology, and materials have also been considered for different teaching contexts (e.g. suggestions for free design programs, rotations for access to computers or digital technology).

**d. Indicator:** Instructional materials include guidance and resources such as ones designed specifically to build teachers' subject matter knowledge in the media arts discipline.

- This could include opportunities to connect with meaningful communities of practice, or guidance and resources for professional development.
- For media arts, especially consider technology tutorials, explicit guidance around student privacy, ethical AI in the arts, crosswalks with standards, and links to design and production communities.
- Materials could include supports for teachers in promoting and considering their students' self-expressions; connections to further resources in the district or the community; as well as guidance to practice culturally and linguistically sustaining instruction in the arts.



# DANCE CURRICULUM REVIEW RUBRIC (IN- DEPTH)

## Standards Alignment

### 1. **Criterion:** Coherence & Organization

**a. Indicator:** Instructional materials are aligned to content standards by grade levels.

- Materials are aligned to the expectations for artistic practices by their grade levels.
- Lesson objectives and tasks are aligned to Massachusetts content standards (even if they are labeled for a different grade).
- Materials, including texts, videos, or graphic sources, address content standards with an appropriate level of depth and complexity for the intended grade dyad.
- Content presented is factually accurate and reflects current scholarship.
- The progression from previous units and to future units supports full coverage of the standards for content and expectations for artistic practices by their grade levels (Guiding Principles 1 and 2).

**b. Indicator:** Instructional materials articulate a coherent and rigorous progression of learning that builds through each unit to develop students' artistic intent and technical concepts and skills.

- Artistic intent is the meaning the artist aimed for in a work, so far as it can be determined from the artist's statements and/or cultural context.
- Materials move students across dance foundational skills progressions, from movement improvisation (inner sensing, using movement vocabulary, and movement inquiry); to making meaning through movement (embodied

awareness, relating, and communicating), in ways that are developmentally appropriate and appropriate for physical development.

- Materials are designed to build students' knowledge and skills over time. (Guiding Principle 3)
- Materials and technical concepts and skills are appropriate to the range of child development (Guiding Principles 1 and 2).

**c. Indicator:** Instructional materials support students' abilities to develop their artistic literacy with increasing levels of complexity.

- Artistic literacy is the ability to participate authentically in the arts through creating, performing or presenting, responding, and connecting.
- Lessons and units build on previous understanding and prior knowledge, connecting content and concepts within and across grades and courses.
- Students have repeated opportunities to apply content standards and artistic literacy over time.

**d. Indicator:** Instructional materials promote meaningful connections with other disciplines, bodies of knowledge, and students' authentic, cultural, and linguistic identities.

- Materials support students' authentic engagement by providing opportunities to produce/perform their dance works for peers, family, and community, in other spaces.
- Materials connect students' artwork to increasingly complex understandings and experiences of art in their community and interdisciplinary societal, cultural, and historical contexts.
- Materials provide opportunities to learn about and appreciate culturally diverse artists and artworks.
- Materials weave in visual, music, and theatre content and vocabulary to support and scaffold dance instruction and promote cross-curricular learning that aids skills development and reflection.
- Materials support students in exploring, expressing, and reflecting on their intersecting personal, cultural, and social identities through meaningful dance experiences.

## **2. Criterion:** Classroom Tasks & Instruction

**a. Indicator:** Learning tasks are articulated, measurable, and grade-appropriate.

- Tasks consistently engage students in age-appropriate artistic practices, including one or more of the following:
  - a diversity of discipline-specific, age-appropriate sources (e.g., texts, images, performances, and artistic statements).
  - discipline-specific, age-appropriate tasks that ask students to reflect for a variety of purposes and audiences.
  - discipline-specific, age-appropriate listening and speaking tasks that ask students to engage in active listening and academic discourse.
- Tasks are related to the stated learning objectives, and students understand what they are expected to do (Guiding Principle 6).

**b. Indicator:** Tasks cover a variety of modalities.

- A variety of modalities could include opportunities for students to demonstrate learning through both individual and group activities so students who thrive in one context but struggle in another aren't only being assessed in one way, or could include writing, group discussions, movement, etc.
- Tasks give students opportunities in dance to develop their understanding of dance through a range of traditional and innovative techniques and processes.

**c. Indicator:** Tasks clearly work to support students in demonstrating their learning in dance.

- There are both formative and summative opportunities for students to understand the expectations to create, perform, respond, or connect (to peers, audience, or themselves) in ways that are age appropriate.
- Tasks give students opportunities in dance to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through interactive and iterative art making processes and perceive or analyze dance works in culturally responsive ways through self-expression.

## **Classroom Application**

### **1. Criterion:** Accessibility for Students

- a. Indicator:** Materials provide multimodal ways for students to access the content and demonstrate learning, helping teachers meet students' diverse needs.
- Explicit supports and scaffolding for students with disabilities and multilingual students; diverse approaches to engagement; explicit supports or modifications using CLSP for students with diverse identities and needs.
  - The materials take into account students with diverse identities in their instructional design, creating different access points, modified materials, or even scaffolded materials (Guiding Principles 4, 10).
  - Multimodal instruction encompasses inclusive opportunities to address levels of child development and physical movement.
  - This could also include adaptive opportunities to explore and experiment with multi-media (visual, audio, etc.) supports, or translations.
- b. Indicator:** Instructional materials contain multimodal opportunities for all students, including those with diverse needs, to develop their social emotional skills.
- Explicit supports and scaffolding for students with disabilities and multilingual students; diverse approaches to engagement; explicit supports or modifications using CLSP for students with diverse identities and needs.
  - The materials consider students with diverse identities by creating broad and frequent access to artwork (Guiding Principles 2, 5, 7, and 9).
  - The materials include opportunities to reflect upon, communicate, and develop students' understanding of artistic intent, and to explore their relationality to peers and the surrounding community, and self-reflective processes.
    - This could also include varied opportunities for reflective and/or collaborative projects that promote self-expression and/or collaboration to promote social emotional skill development (e.g., self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making skills, and social awareness).
- c. Indicator:** Instructional materials contain a variety of culturally and linguistically sustaining opportunities for all students to communicate their own artistic intents and growth within the dance discipline.
- Explicit supports and scaffolding for students with disabilities and

multilingual students; diverse approaches to engagement; explicit supports or modifications using CLSP for students with diverse identities and needs.

- Materials prompt connections between classroom learning and students' identities, families, and/or communities outside of school.
  - Thoughtful considerations of student choice and voice are included.
  - Materials consider the diverse identities of students, and opportunities for artistic experiences that are meaningfully and authentically connected to their lives, identities, and communities are given (Guiding Principle 4, 6, 8, 9, 10).
  - Students are encouraged and supported to share diverse cultural dance examples from their own lives into the classroom through discussion, artifacts, and/or interest.

## **2. Criterion:** Usability for Teachers

**a. Indicator:** Instructional materials support teachers with suggested classroom routines and structures in ways that broaden student experiences by taking on different artistic roles and groupings.

- Materials include suggestions and instructions about routines such as set-up of an artistic space; information about expected student behavior, especially during presentations and performances, and suggested classroom mapping instructions.
- There are considerations about structures (e.g., grouping strategies in ensemble classes) and protocols (e.g. expectations around giving and receiving feedback from peers).

**b. Indicator:** Instructional materials include rubrics, exemplars, and guidance to set high expectations around presentation/performance/production. There are assessments that help teachers measure learning in authentic and meaningful ways.

- Arts assessments serve as meaningful demonstrations of learning and authentic expressions of students' artistic intent, whether through self-reflection or by creating, performing, and connecting with an external audience (Guiding Principles 1, 2, 4, 9, and 10).

- Authentic and meaningful assessments could include formative as well as cumulative measurements of learning, formal and informal tasks (e.g., peer feedback, exit tickets, checks for understandings), opportunities for co-creation (e.g., opportunities for student co-construction of assessment criteria, especially around larger time scale projects to build student ownership and voice), and should stretch beyond only student behavior, such as effort or task completion.
- Assessments could serve to uncover misunderstandings and areas for growth by offering feedback on the mastery of key performance elements, such as timing, musicality, and movement technique, when applicable.
- Materials provide teacher guidance toward next steps based on assessment data (e.g., reteaching, reassessing, continued practice). Helpful identifications could include structured ways to intervene with common student challenges.

**c. Indicator:** Pacing is reasonable and flexible; the curriculum can be implemented within the grade level, and provides guidance or resources to support implementation in a teacher’s particular context.

- Teacher guidance is approachable and clear and may even consider accommodations for teacher absences or educator talent changes in the program.
- Instructional time for the arts varies greatly based upon local context; considerations for this have been included in order to expand or contract, by keeping the most essential elements intact.
- Access to resources such as space, technology, and materials have also been considered for different teaching contexts (e.g. lack of dance studio space and alternative options).

**d. Indicator:** Instructional materials include guidance and resources designed specifically to build teachers’ subject matter knowledge in the dance discipline.

- This could include opportunities to connect with meaningful communities of practice, or guidance and resources for professional development.
- Materials could include supports for teachers in promoting and considering their students’ self-expressions; connections to further resources in the district or the community; as well as guidance to practice culturally and linguistically

sustaining instruction in the arts.



# THEATRE CURRICULUM REVIEW RUBRIC (IN-DEPTH)

## Standards Alignment

### 1. **Criterion:** Coherence & Organization

**a. Indicator:** Instructional materials are aligned to content standards by grade levels.

- Materials are aligned to the expectations for artistic practices by grade levels.
- Lesson objectives and tasks are aligned to Massachusetts content standards (even if they are labeled for a different dyad).
- Materials, including images, scripts, written texts, artifacts, librettos, and multimedia sources such as recorded performances or rehearsals, address content standards and demonstrate appropriate depth and complexity for the intended grade dyad.
- Content presented is factually accurate, reflects current scholarship, and evolving techniques (e.g. style of theatre, design, acting, etc.)
- Materials take into account theatre and drama specific concepts such as blocking, characterization, ensemble work, improvisation, etc.
- The progression from previous units to future units supports full coverage of the standards for content and expectations for artistic practices by their grade levels (Guiding Principles 1 and 2).

**b. Indicator:** Instructional materials articulate a coherent and rigorous progression of learning that builds through each unit, specifically to develop students' artistic intent, theatre concepts, and technical skills.

- Artistic intent is the meaning the artist intended in a work, so far as it can be determined from the artist's statements or cultural context.

- Materials move students towards the development of artistic intent and technical skills in a logical progression (e.g. from foundational to advanced theatre and technical skills like directing, script-writing, staging, etc.).
- Objectives should reflect the vocabulary, theatrical form (play, monologue, video/audio presentations, story drama, process drama, etc.), and student roles appropriate to the grade level dyad.
- Materials are designed to build students' knowledge and skills over time.  
(Guiding Principle 3)

**c. Indicator:** Instructional materials support students' abilities to build their artistic literacy with increasing levels of complexity.

- Artistic literacy is the ability to participate authentically in the arts through creating, performing or presenting, responding, and connecting.
- Lessons and units build on previous understanding and prior knowledge, using this to connect content and concepts within and across grades and courses.
- Students have repeated opportunities to apply content standards and build artistic literacy over time.
- Consider how students respond to the theatrical ideas of others, as well as how students generate ideas, revise projects, and reflect on artistic intent using embodied processes, digital platforms, varied tools, or recording software.

**d. Indicator:** Instructional materials promote meaningful connections with other disciplines, bodies of knowledge, and students' authentic, cultural, and linguistic identities.

- Materials support students' authentic engagement by providing opportunities to create/perform their works to peers, family, community, and in other spaces.
- Materials connect students' theatrical artwork to increasingly complex understandings and experiences of art in their community and interdisciplinary societal, cultural, historical, and relevant political contexts.
- Materials provide opportunities to learn about and appreciate culturally diverse artists and artworks.
- Materials weave in visual, music, and dance content and vocabulary to support and scaffold theatre instruction and promote cross-curricular learning that

aids skills development and reflection.

- Materials support students in exploring, expressing, and reflecting on their intersecting personal, cultural, and social identities through meaningful theatre experiences.

## **2. Criterion:** Classroom Tasks & Instruction

**a. Indicator:** Learning tasks are articulated, measurable, and grade-appropriate.

- Tasks consistently engage students in age-appropriate theatre practices, including one or more of the following:
  - a variety of discipline-specific, age-appropriate skills (e.g., active participation in drama work, monologue development, scene study, line memorization, collaborative script creation)
  - discipline-specific, age-appropriate tasks that ask students to reflect on a variety of purposes and audiences.
  - discipline-specific, age-appropriate listening and speaking tasks that ask students to engage in active listening and vocalization through participation and performance, and
  - embodied and processes-based experiences not aimed for an outside audience, which focus on the use of drama-based pedagogy and applied theatre practice (e.g., Boal).
- Tasks are related to the stated learning objectives, and students understand what they are expected to do (Guiding Principle 6).

**b. Indicator:** Tasks cover a variety of modalities.

- A variety of modalities could include opportunities for students to demonstrate learning through both individual and group activities, so students who thrive in one context but struggle in another aren't only being assessed in one way, or could include writing, group discussions, physical movement, and other diverse forms of expression.
- Tasks give students opportunities in theatre to explore both existing and emerging technologies (e.g. videography) and theater techniques through experimentation of varied mediums.

**c. Indicator:** Tasks clearly work to support students in demonstrating their learning

in theatre.

- There are both formative and summative opportunities across a range of theatre and technical skills (e.g. expressivity, technical accuracy, and interpretation) for students to understand the expectations to create, present, respond, or connect (to peers, audience, or themselves) in ways that are developmentally appropriate.
- Tasks should include authentic performance products (e.g., performance rubrics, director's notes, design portfolios), reflective artist statements, or analyses of performances (e.g. character studies, interpretations).
- Tasks give students opportunities to in theatre to:
  - experiment with devising, directing, staging, and other forms of interactivity,
  - develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through iterative art-making processes, both individually and in group settings,
  - develop original or adapted work to practice or rehearse skills, concepts, or ideas, and
  - perceive or analyze artistic work through a culturally responsive lens.

## **Classroom Application**

### **1. Criterion:** Accessibility for Students

**a. Indicator:** Materials provide multimodal ways for students to access the content and demonstrate learning, helping teachers meet students' diverse needs

- Explicit supports and scaffolding for students with disabilities and multilingual students; diverse approaches to engagement; explicit supports or modifications for students with diverse identities and needs.
- The materials take into account students with diverse identities in its instructional design, creating different access points, modified materials, or even scaffolded materials (Guiding Principles 4, 10).
- This could also include adaptive opportunities to explore and experiment with script reading, voice work, theatre technology, or scaffolds such as script adaptation, visual storyboarding, flexible groupings.

**b. Indicator:** Instructional materials contain multimodal opportunities for all students, including those with diverse needs, to develop their social-emotional skills.

- Explicit supports and scaffolding for students with disabilities and multilingual students; diverse approaches to engagement; explicit supports or modifications for students with diverse identities and needs.
- The materials consider students with diverse identities by creating broad and frequent access to artwork (Guiding Principles 2, 5, 7 and 9).
- The materials include opportunities to reflect upon, communicate, and develop students' understanding of artistic intent, and to explore their relationality to peers and the surrounding community, and self-reflective processes.
  - This could also include varied opportunities for reflective and/or collaborative projects that promote self-expression and/or collaboration to promote social emotional skill development (e.g., self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making skills, and social awareness).

**c. Indicator:** Instructional materials contain a variety of culturally and linguistically sustaining opportunities for all students to communicate their own artistic intents and growth within the theatre discipline.

- Explicit supports and scaffolding for students with disabilities and multilingual students; diverse approaches to engagement; explicit supports or modifications for students with diverse identities and needs.
- Students are invited to explore and express a variety of identities, including their own, through character work and storytelling.
- Materials prompt connections between classroom learning and students' identities, families, and/or communities outside of school (e.g. topic of story or process drama work, choice of play; script selections; types of artists being studied, etc.).
- Thoughtful considerations of student choice and voice are included.
- Materials consider the diverse identities of students, and opportunities for artistic experiences that are meaningfully and authentically connected to their lives, identities, and communities are given (Guiding Principle 4, 6, 8, 9, 10).

- Students are encouraged and supported to share diverse cultural theatrical examples from their own lives into the classroom through discussion, artifacts, and/or interest.

## **2. Criterion:** Usability for Teachers

**a. Indicator:** Instructional materials support teachers with suggested classroom routines and structures in ways that broaden student experiences to different artistic roles and groupings.

- Materials include suggestions and instructions about routines such as setting up and taking down rehearsal spaces, protocols for group work, role delegation, or ensemble structures, and considerations for collaborative creation.
- Safety practices are explained and used consistently when dealing with equipment, tools, or instruments (e.g. hanging lights, working with hand tools, etc.).
- There are considerations about structures (e.g., grouping strategies in ensemble classes) and protocols (e.g. expectations around giving and receiving feedback from peers).

**b. Indicator:** Instructional materials include rubrics, exemplars, and guidance to set high expectations around presentation/performance/production. There are assessments that help teachers measure learning in authentic and meaningful ways.

- Arts assessments serve as meaningful demonstrations of learning and authentic expressions of students' artistic intent, whether through self-reflection or by creating, performing, and connecting with an external audience (Guiding Principles 1, 2, 4, 9, and 10).
- Authentic and meaningful assessments could include formative as well as cumulative measurements of learning, formal and informal tasks (e.g., peer feedback, exit tickets, checks for understandings), opportunities for co-creation (e.g., opportunities for student co-construction of assessment criteria, especially around larger time scale projects to build student ownership and voice), and should stretch beyond only student behavior, such as effort or task

completion.

- Assessments could help identify students' misconceptions and gaps in knowledge when demonstrating mastery of specific artistic techniques.
- Materials provide teacher guidance toward next steps based on assessment data (e.g., reteaching, reassessing, continued practice). Helpful identifications could include structured ways to intervene with common student challenges.

**c. Indicator:** Pacing is reasonable and flexible; the curriculum can be implemented within the grade level, and provides guidance or resources to support implementation in a teacher's particular context.

- Teacher guidance is approachable and clear and may even consider accommodations for teacher absences or educator talent changes in the program.
- Instructional time for the arts varies greatly based upon local context; considerations for this have been included in order to expand or contract, by keeping the most essential elements intact.
- Access to resources such as space, technology, and materials have also been considered for different teaching contexts (e.g. lack of dance studio space and alternative options).

**d. Indicator:** Instructional materials include guidance and resources such as ones designed specifically to build teachers' subject matter knowledge in the theatre discipline.

- This could include opportunities to connect with meaningful communities of practice, or guidance and resources for professional development.
- For theatre, consider supports for teacher learning with theatre-specific pedagogy, including direction, design, and culturally responsive or gender-affirming casting/representation practices.
- Materials could include supports for teachers in promoting and considering their students' self-expressions; connections to further resources in the district or the community; as well as guidance to practice culturally and linguistically sustaining instruction in the arts.



# MUSIC CURRICULUM REVIEW RUBRIC (IN- DEPTH)

## Standards Alignment

### 1. **Criterion:** Coherence & Organization

**a. Indicator:** Instructional materials are aligned to content standards by grade levels.

- Materials are aligned to the expectations for artistic practices by their grade levels.
- Lesson objectives and tasks are aligned to Massachusetts content standards (even if they are labeled for a different grade dyad).
- Materials, including scores, texts, recordings, performance excerpts, and instructional media, address content standards with an appropriate level of depth and complexity for the intended grade dyad.
- Content presented is factually accurate and reflects current scholarship and expert knowledge in music or arts education.
- The progression from previous units and to future units supports full coverage of the standards for content and expectations for artistic practices by their grade levels (Guiding Principles 1 and 2).

**b. Indicator:** Instructional materials articulate a coherent and rigorous progression of learning that builds through each unit to develop students' artistic intent, musical concepts and technical skills

- Artistic intent is the meaning the artist intended in a work, so far as it can be determined from the artist's statements and/or cultural context.
- Materials move students across music foundational skills progressions, from developing foundational skills (e.g., pitch, rhythm, dynamics, and form); to

making meaning through musical elements (e.g., melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, and timbre), in ways that are developmentally appropriate.

- Materials are designed to build students' knowledge and skills over time. (Guiding Principle 3)
- Music materials, concepts, and technical skills align with the developmental stages of learners (Guiding Principles 1 and 2).

**c. Indicator:** Instructional materials support students' abilities to build their artistic literacy with increasing levels of complexity.

- Artistic literacy is the ability to participate authentically in the arts through creating, performing or presenting, responding, and connecting.
- Lessons and units build on previous understanding and prior knowledge, using this to connect content and concepts within and across grades and courses.
- Students have repeated opportunities to apply and practice content standards and artistic literacy over time.

**d. Indicator:** Instructional materials promote meaningful connections with other disciplines, bodies of knowledge, and students' authentic, cultural, and linguistic identities.

- Materials support students' authentic engagement by providing opportunities to create/perform musical works for peers, family, community, and for audiences in general.
- Materials connect students' music-making to increasingly complex understandings and experiences of art in their community and interdisciplinary societal, cultural, historical, and relevant political contexts..
- Materials provide opportunities to learn about and appreciate culturally diverse artists and artworks.
- Materials support students in exploring, expressing, and reflecting on their intersecting personal, cultural, and social identities through meaningful music experiences.
- Materials weave in visual, theatre, and dance content and vocabulary to support and scaffold music instruction and promote cross-curricular learning that aids skills development and reflection.

## **2. Criterion:** Classroom Tasks & Instruction

**a. Indicator:** Learning tasks are articulated, measurable, and grade-appropriate.

- Tasks consistently engage students in age-appropriate artistic practices, including one or more of the following:
  - a diversity of discipline-specific, age-appropriate sources (e.g., texts, audio, images, performances, and artistic statements).
  - discipline-specific, age-appropriate tasks covering the range of musical practices (composing, arranging, improvising, performing, and responding), and ask students to reflect for a variety of purposes and audiences.
  - discipline-specific, age-appropriate listening, speaking, playing, and singing tasks that ask students to engage in active listening and academic discourse.
- Tasks are related to the stated learning objectives, and students understand what they are expected to do (Guiding Principle 6).

**b. Indicator:** Tasks cover a variety of modalities.

- A variety of modalities could include opportunities for students to demonstrate learning through both individual and group activities, so students who thrive in one context but struggle in another aren't only being assessed in one way, or could include writing, group discussions, physical movement, and other diverse forms of expression.
- Tasks give students opportunities in music to develop their understanding of a range of traditional and innovative techniques and processes through experimentation of varied mediums.

**c. Indicator:** Tasks clearly work to support students in demonstrating their learning in music.

- There are both formative and summative opportunities across a range of music and technical skills (e.g. expressivity, technical accuracy, and interpretation of musical intent) for students to understand the expectations to create, present, respond, or connect (to peers, audience, or themselves) in ways that are grade appropriate.
- Tasks give students opportunities in music to develop critical thinking and

problem-solving skills through interactive and iterative art making processes and perceive or analyze artistic work in culturally responsive ways through self-expression.

## Classroom Application

### 1. **Criterion:** Accessibility for Students

**a. Indicator:** Materials provide multimodal ways for students to access the content and demonstrate learning, helping teachers meet students' diverse needs.

- Explicit supports and scaffolding for students with disabilities and multilingual students; diverse approaches to engagement; explicit supports or modifications for students with diverse identities and needs.
- The materials take into account students with diverse identities in its instructional design, creating different access points, modified materials, or even scaffolded materials (Guiding Principles 4, 10).
  - For music, this could include existing, alternative, iconic, graphic, or simplified notation, or multilingual resources for music vocabulary.
- Multimodal ways could encompass providing inclusive opportunities to address levels of child development and physical movement, such as kinesthetic learning of musical elements through movement, conducting, or body percussion (e.g., Embodied Music Cognition).
- This could also include inclusive opportunities to explore and experiment with multi-media (visual, audio, etc.) supports, or translations.

**b. Indicator:** Instructional materials contain multimodal opportunities for all students, including those with diverse needs, to develop their social-emotional skills.

- Explicit supports and scaffolding for students with disabilities and multilingual students; diverse approaches to engagement; explicit supports or modifications for students with diverse identities and needs.
- The materials consider students with diverse identities by creating broad and frequent access to musical works from a wide variety of traditions/genres/styles (Guiding Principles 2, 5, 7 and 9).

- The materials include opportunities to reflect, communicate, and develop students' understanding of artistic intent, to explore their relationality to peers and the surrounding community, and engage in self-reflective processes.
  - This could also include varied opportunities for reflective and/or collaborative projects that promote self-expression and/or collaboration to promote social emotional skill development (e.g., solo performance confidence, musical storytelling, self-management, relationship skills in collaborative ensembles, responsible decision-making skills, and social awareness).

**c. Indicator:** Instructional materials contain a variety of culturally and linguistically sustaining opportunities for all students to communicate their own artistic intents and growth within the music discipline.

- Explicit supports and scaffolding for students with disabilities and multilingual students; diverse approaches to engagement; explicit supports or modifications for students with diverse identities and needs.
- Materials prompt connections between classroom learning and students' identities, families, and/or communities outside of school.
  - Thoughtful considerations of student choice and voice are included.
  - Materials consider the diverse identities of students, and opportunities for artistic experiences that are meaningfully and authentically connected to their lives, identities, and communities are given (Guiding Principle 4, 6, 8, 9, 10).
  - Students are encouraged and supported to share diverse cultural music examples from their own lives into the classroom through discussion, artifacts, and/or interest.

## **2. Criterion:** Usability for Teachers

**a. Indicator:** Instructional materials support teachers with suggested classroom routines and structures in ways that broaden student experiences to different artistic roles and groupings.

- Materials include suggestions and instructions about routines such as set-up of musical spaces (e.g. studios, stages, etc.); information about expected

student behavior, especially around instrument care, or audience/performing behavior for various venues/genres, and suggested classroom mapping instructions.

- There are considerations about structures (e.g., grouping strategies in ensemble classes, ensemble rehearsals, or composition projects), resources (e.g. annotated scores), and protocols (e.g. expectations around giving and receiving feedback from peers, directions for score analysis, and ear training).

**b. Indicator:** Instructional materials include rubrics, exemplars, and guidance to set high expectations around presentation/performance/production. There are assessments that help teachers measure learning in authentic and meaningful ways.

- Arts assessments serve as meaningful demonstrations of learning and authentic expressions of students' artistic intent, whether through self-reflection or by creating, performing, and connecting with an external audience (Guiding Principles 1, 2, 4, 9, and 10). Authentic and meaningful assessments could include formative as well as cumulative measurements of learning, formal and informal tasks (e.g., peer feedback, exit tickets, checks for understandings), opportunities for co-creation (e.g., opportunities for student co-construction of assessment criteria, especially around large composition projects or larger time scale projects to build student ownership and voice), and should stretch beyond only student behavior, such as effort or task completion.
- Assessments could serve to uncover misunderstandings and areas for growth by offering feedback on the mastery of key performance elements, such as rhythm and meter, rhythmic accuracy, timing, expressive interpretation, or technical accuracy, when applicable.
- Materials provide teacher guidance toward next steps based on assessment data (e.g., reteaching, reassessing, continued practice, developing and refining musical work for performance. Helpful identifications could include structured ways to intervene with common student challenges.

**c. Indicator:** Pacing is reasonable and flexible; the curriculum can be implemented within the grade level, and provides guidance or resources to support

implementation in a teacher's particular context.

- Teacher guidance is approachable and clear and may even consider accommodations for teacher absences or educator talent changes in the program.
- Instructional time for the arts varies greatly based upon local context; considerations for this have been included in order to expand or contract, by keeping the most essential elements intact.
- Access to resources such as space, instruments, technology, and materials has also been considered for different teaching contexts (e.g. rehearsal/orchestral spaces, availability of instruments, and alternative resource options).

**d. Indicator:** Instructional materials include guidance and resources such as ones designed specifically to build teachers' subject matter knowledge in the music discipline.

- This could include opportunities to connect with meaningful communities of practice or guidance and resources for professional development.
- Materials could include connections to resources that present music in an authentic context (e.g. different musical traditions, performances by culture bearers, or demonstrations of different levels of participation and audience involvement for those not in the performing group).
- Materials could include supports for teachers in promoting and considering their students' self-expression in music; connections to further resources in the district or the community; as well as guidance to practice culturally and linguistically sustaining instruction in the arts.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*A special thanks to Reading Public Schools and Worcester Public Schools for submitting their district designed materials for review. While our reporting has exclusively focused on published materials, your submissions helped inform our curriculum landscape analysis, contributed significantly to the development of our rubrics, and refined our thinking around the establishment of best practices. Thank you and other district partners for your collaboration!*

*A special thanks to Rennie Center for the hard work in conducting the landscape analysis, development of content scoring rubrics, training and guiding of arts expert panel reviewers, and compiling product reports, to name a few of the many tasks they coordinated for the Arts Curriculum Review. We especially thank Grace Wang for her tireless work on this project.*



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For more information contact: [dawn.m.benski@mass.gov](mailto:dawn.m.benski@mass.gov)