

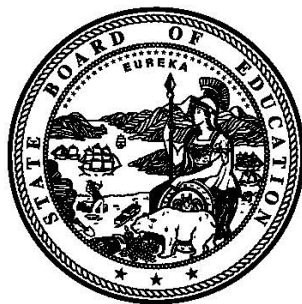
**EXCERPT: Improving Arts Education Through Strategic Program Evaluation and Planning**  
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This excerpt from Chapter 9: Implementing Arts education, is provided for use with the **Informed Decision-Making Inquiry** on the California Arts Education Framework Resources for Implementation website located at <https://www.calartsedframework.org/>.  
The full framework can be accessed at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/vp/cf/>.



# CALIFORNIA ARTS EDUCATION FRAMEWORK FOR CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE TWELVE**  
**DANCE ■ MEDIA ARTS ■ MUSIC ■ THEATRE ■ VISUAL ARTS**



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## Notice

The guidance in the *California Arts Education Framework for Public Schools, Transitional Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* is not binding on local educational agencies or other entities. Except for the statutes, regulations, and court decisions that are referenced herein, the document is exemplary and compliance with it is not mandatory. (See California *Education Code* Section 33308.5.)

prints, interactive websites, design campaigns, multi-media installations, journalistic and documentary projects, or site-specific collaborative projects that engage with cultural issues through activism. This broad range of outputs require proficiency in, or at least experience with, tools such as digital image editing; basic computer programming; image and text layout; video editing; sound production and design; storyboarding, sequencing, and concept development; as well as more fundamental skills of research, online behavior, collaborative and group thinking, and digital file management. (Connecticut State Department of Education 2017)

Student access to necessary instructional materials cannot rely on fundraising or securing grants. District and school budgets should reflect allocated funds to support students' equal access to necessary expenditures related to arts education, instructional materials, and provide for ongoing maintenance of tools, equipment, and technology (California Department of Education 2020).

The California Department of Education Arts page (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/vp/cf/ch9.asp#link5>) provides guidance on ensuring safe and healthy arts materials. The California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) Art Hazards page (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/vp/cf/ch9.asp#link6>) includes a list of art materials that should not be purchased (2021).

Instructional materials used in California public schools must follow *Education Code* sections 60040–60045 and 60048, as well as the State Board of Education guidelines in *Standards for Evaluating Instructional Materials for Social Content, 2013 Edition*, which is found at the California Department of Education Social Content Review page (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/vp/cf/ch9.asp#link7>) (2021b). Chapter 10, "Instructional Materials," provides detailed guidance related to social content review, and the previous arts chapters (3–7) have discipline-specific guidance.

## Improving Arts Education Through Strategic Program Evaluation and Planning

As each LEA exists in its own distinctive local context, with strengths and challenges, there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to improving existing arts education programs that will work for all districts. Effective approaches engage teachers, school leaders, families, and interested community members in comparing the district's current arts education instructional programs to the *Education Code* and guiding documents for arts education, and in evaluating the district's programs for qualities of effective arts education programs. This approach mirrors and can even be embedded with the development of a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and other educational improvement strategies. To ensure a smooth and successful conclusion, those who wish to assess, develop, implement, and sustain a district arts education plan should first determine if their district has specific practices for developing improvement plans. Conducting program assessment

and developing an improvement plan as a professional learning process increases the possibility for success and lasting change. Using the assessment data gathered, the district can then begin to develop an arts education improvement plan to strategically begin the journey of improving the district's arts learning for all students.

The following describes an approach to developing an arts education improvement plan that can be modified to meet individual LEA cultures, established processes, and requirements. The steps outlined in the approach can provide useful guidance for districts or schools that are or are not developing full improvement plans.

## **Establishing and Preparing a District Arts Team**

Establishing a core district arts team that engages in the entirety of the improvement process is necessary for collecting quality data, analyzing data, identifying learning gaps, and deciding equitable approaches to improvement. To be effective, the team should be representative of all schools and all arts subject areas within the district. Arts educators are critical team members. At least one art educator from each arts discipline and level, multiple-subject teachers, special education teachers, and district-level personnel should be included. This ensures a wide representation of various perspectives. It can be beneficial to broaden the team to include school board members, community members, families, students, and interested community members. In districts that have standing curriculum committees, representatives from the committee should be included. Often in these districts, the arts education team will function as a curriculum subcommittee.

Successful approaches typically begin with a small core leadership group. This group is responsible for convening the larger district arts team, communications, and meeting organization. The core team also is responsible for keeping the process on schedule, guiding the process, monitoring benchmarks, and finalizing the resulting plan. The core leadership group can be useful in identifying members or types of members needed for the larger district arts team. Successful approaches often engage the expertise and support from an outside facilitator knowledgeable about California arts education. Using an outside facilitator with expertise in standards-based arts education to work closely with the core team is helpful in guiding the process and allows all members of the core leadership group to participate in the process. The outside facilitator can provide arts education expertise that may be missing within the district and act as an impartial voice to ask the hard questions.

Once the structure of the team is determined and members are selected, the process typically begins with establishing a common understanding of what arts education is and what it is not. This leads to developing a shared vision of the goals, intent, requirements, and needs of an inclusive, equitable, standards-based arts education program for all students. The core leadership group plans for and includes the district arts team in this important foundational professional learning centered on topics such as the *California Education Code* relating to the arts and the arts standards and framework. This builds consensus, knowledge, improvement strategies, and advocacy of the district's arts education program.

## Assessing the District's Arts Education Programs

An effective arts education program assessment provides students, teachers, site and educational leaders, families, and community members with information on student learning in each of the arts disciplines. The evaluation of the arts programs should provide overall and subject-specific data on the opportunities to learn in the arts for all students. The evaluation should also identify what is limited to specific schools or students, as well as barriers to instruction. Periodic assessment of the district's existing arts education program is critical for program inclusion, improvement, expansion, and effectiveness.

Information gained from a districtwide systematic programmatic evaluation provides guidance for initial development or updating of an existing arts education improvement plan. Program evaluation can include data gained through enrollment numbers, course offerings, opportunities to learn for all students, and examination of student work related to grade level benchmark assessments. The assessment should provide data, identify strengths, and focus on areas that can clarify improvements needed to ensure all students receive an equitable, effective, and standards-based arts education.

The assessment can be administered by the core leadership group, the district arts team, or the district may utilize a self-evaluation approach. It is important that the assessment be conducted in a similar fashion and with common questions to ensure data can be analyzed. Whatever approach is used, the goal is to collect baseline data from each school. The important component is to make sure the survey is organized so that the prompts yield the necessary data. The assessment should

- ask the same prompts across all schools, with variations as needed for elementary, middle, and high school contexts;
- be administered in a consistent approach; and
- collect the data in a way that the results can be analyzed.

A variety of survey instruments have been developed over the years to support districtwide arts assessment and planning. These instruments share a common set of program aspects that reflect fundamental components needed for a comprehensive arts program (standard-based curriculum, scheduling, staffing, materials, equipment, and facilities). Assessment tools can also include aspects of finding out about the budget that funds arts education. Identifying district, school site, and outside funding sources at the individual school and district levels provides insight into any areas of inequity of arts education funding across and within the district. It can also provide successful funding ideas, approaches, or models that could be shared across all schools within the district.

Data gained through the assessment is useful in providing a school-by-school view of the current arts education programs as well as an overall district view. This yields information for a data-driven approach for the development of a district arts education plan that addresses gaps and builds upon strengths across and within each school. Common prompts asked of schools when assessing their existing arts education programs include:



- What arts disciplines are being taught?
- Which students have access to learn in dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts? Which do not? What are the barriers or challenges preventing access?
- Who is teaching the arts?
- How much instructional time is allocated? Are there daily, weekly, or other scheduling formats?
- How is the instruction aligned to the *California Arts Standards*?
- What arts classroom and programmatic assessment strategies are in place?
- What arts facilities, equipment, materials, and supplies exist? Who has access?
- How are the arts education programs funded?
- If there is funding expended, what does it pay for? What does it not pay for?
- Who is responsible for the arts education programs?

Responses to the assessment survey should come from a variety of sources including the school and district staff, administrators, teachers (multiple subject, single subject, and special education), support staff, and arts resource teachers responsible for the arts education program. The district may use information gained from other district or school site data sources including California Accountability Model and School Dashboard, California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS), Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), or Western Association of Schools and Colleges Report (WASC), or annual financial data. For districts with secondary schools, the California Department of Education and the Arts Education Data Project provide a set of tools that offer school, district, county, and statewide levels of secondary data from information submitted by schools to the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS).

The compilation of data gathered from each school should result in a school-by-school comparison as well as a districtwide view of the current arts education program. From this data, gaps and strengths can be identified to provide direction for the improvement plan. Assessment findings should be made public and shared widely to inform families, students, teachers, administrators, and community members. When approached as a process, assessment of a district's arts education program provides an opportunity to inform all interested parties, build leadership, and advocate an effective arts education program.

## **Developing the District Arts Education Improvement Plan**

The next step in the process is to develop a district arts education improvement plan. The plan is based on the goals identified for arts education and on the data obtained in the arts assessment. The improvement plan may take the form of other district subject area improvement plans, or it can be created as a customized plan for arts education. Successful plans often span three to five years, provide quarterly accountability checks, and outline yearly evaluation reports on progress.