

# **The California Art Education Association Position Paper on High School Visual Art Courses**

**2005**

**Cris Guenter, Ed.D., President  
California Art Education Association**

## **Foreword**

The mission of visual art educators in California is to provide all students with learning opportunities that promote personal expression and the acquisition of knowledge and skills in the visual arts. Direct study and active participation in the visual arts offers unique situations in which students may develop and demonstrate their cognitive and affective skills, critical modes of thought, cultural values and beliefs, and their comprehension of self and others. The study of historical and contemporary art and the creating of art professes values inherent in a democracy: appreciating diversity, making informed decisions, and being able to express individual vision. Aesthetic awareness is intrinsic to art education and needs to be developed, nurtured, and encouraged in all students so that the quality of both their personal and community life is enhanced. The California Art Education Association is committed to strengthening visual arts education in all grades for all students. This position paper represents part of that commitment by presenting guidelines resources for determining an effective visual arts education in high school.

## **Acknowledgements**

In 1991, the California Art Education Association published *This is Art: A Position Paper on High School Visual Art Courses* under the guidance of Patty Taylor. The CAEA State Council of 2003-2005 called for a revised and updated position paper to align with the many changes to arts education and high school art courses in California in the last 15 years. Dr. Cris Guenter, CAEA President, authored this revision. CAEA members throughout the state participated in a series of draft reviews to refine this document. The 2003-2005 CAEA Council formally approved this position in a unanimous vote on April 30, 2005.

## **CALIFORNIA STATE ART EDUCATION ASSOCIATION STATE COUNCIL 2003-2005**

Cris Guenter, Ed.D., President  
Penelope Venola, President-Elect  
Lydia Vogt, Past President  
Kathleen Rogers, Secretary  
Jane Leese, Treasurer  
Neosk Miller, Executive Secretary  
Gayle Nicholls-Ali, Painted Monkey Editor  
Kathy Farros-Hoepfner, Northern Area President  
Barrie Burnham, Central Area President  
Betty Harrison, Southern Area President  
Nancy Carr, State Department Representative  
Nancy Oudegeest, Curriculum  
Carol Lockwood, Scholarship/TCAP  
David Tamori, Government  
Susan Wuerer, Professional Awards  
Patrice Yokum, Art Camp  
Marilyn Martin, Youth Art Month  
Margaret Works, Historian/Active Retired  
Craig Rieser, Website Coordinator  
Craig Tomlinson, Conference Administrator

## **Introduction**

The California Art Education Association is the professional educational organization for pre-kindergarten through university educators working in all areas of the visual arts, such as drawing, painting, digital media, weaving and fabrics, ceramics, glass, sculpture, and mixed media. This organization, formed in 1965, helps and supports educators by anchoring the elements and principles of design in meaningful instruction and promoting the alignment of the approved state content standards for visual art.

## **The "f" Requirement Policy**

It needs to be noted that beginning with the 2005-2006 academic school year that the California "f" requirement policy calls for one year-long VAPA course (i.e. two semesters of ceramics, or two semesters of digital arts, or two semesters of painting). The two semesters for the VAPA course taken do not have to occur in the same academic year. Prior to the 2005-2006 academic school year, the "f" requirement policy simply called for two art courses in any of the art disciplines (i.e. a semester of ceramics and a semester of painting).

## **The Position of the California Art Education Association**

It is the position of the California Art Education Association that the guidelines and specific checklist of student outcomes presented here should be applied for certifying a course to grant visual arts credit for meeting the state graduation requirement of one year in visual and performing arts or one year of a foreign language. This paper is intended to assist school board members, district superintendents, administrators, curriculum developers, counselors, and teachers responsible for determining the acceptable content of visual arts courses offered to meet the state graduation requirement or for entry into a state university.

The success of any course offered as a basic visual arts course depends on the competence of the teacher assigned to that course. It is the CAEA's position that the teacher assigned to teach a course granting graduation credit for visual arts be a person with a valid credential to teach visual arts. The arts are a core academic subject under the 2002 federal legislation, *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). NCLB helps to address the expectations for content knowledge for the course of instruction. Competence in teaching art requires academic content knowledge in visual art, skill and experience in creating art and in art criticism, and contextual knowledge of art and art history of cultures throughout the world.

## **Guidelines for Visual Art Courses Meeting the High School Graduation Requirement**

CAEA notes and supports the California Education Code, sections 51210 and 51220, which requires instruction in the arts. CAEA concurs with the five strands for arts education established in the *Visual and Performing Arts Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade Twelve*: Artistic Perception, Creative Expression, Historical Cultural Context, Aesthetic Valuing, and Connections, Relationships & Applications. Determining the content of a visual arts course is critical, particularly since many students may not have the opportunity to take more than one visual arts year-long course in high school. This course must then offer the basic content and language of visual art, provide time for appreciating art, connect the visual art content to the historical and cultural context of art, and provide a system for the evaluation of visual art.

When appropriate, visual arts courses should provide instruction as discrete disciplines related to each other, and, when appropriate, to other subject areas in the curriculum. Reading, writing assignments, and related research projects are incorporated in the course of study. Students should participate in art related activities, events, and field trips that involve them in the school

community and make use of local resources. An exhibition program of student work should be developed both on the school site and in the community.

Visual arts curriculum and instructional strategies must encourage students' efforts to experiment, to seek multiple solutions, to be flexible and willing to diverge from initial planning, and to be courageous in the expression of an individual idea. The course should provide the opportunity for students to trust and use their personal vision, experiences, and imagination in producing artwork to meet criteria established for the learning situation of the course. Visual arts course emphasis on the creative process is strongly supported by artistic perception, historical cultural context, aesthetic valuing, and connections, relationships & applications.

Courses should provide students with learning opportunities in the arts that implement the intent of the California State Board of Education approved Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) Content Standards. Curriculum must be designed to align directly with the VAPA Content Standards, at least, the proficiency level in each of the five component strands. Each VAPA course shall sufficiently address the state content standards under ALL five strands, listed below.

1. **Artistic Perception:** Processing, analyzing, and responding to sensory information through the language and skills unique to a given art.
2. **Creative Expression:** Creating, performing, and participating in a given art.
3. **Historical and Cultural Context:** Understanding historical contributions and cultural dimensions of a given art.
4. **Aesthetic Valuing:** Responding to, analyzing, and making critical assessments about works of a given art form.
5. **Connections, Relationships, and Applications:** Connecting and applying what is learned in a given art form to learning in other art forms, subject areas, and careers.

The concepts, knowledge, and skills gained in visual arts courses apply or are relevant to many areas of students' present and future life, study, and work. Participation in visual arts courses gives students an opportunity to assess, with the assistance and expertise of the art teacher, their own artistic potential worthy of further pursuit or possible career. Additionally, the content of the course prepares students to participate in more advanced art study, to go on to other fields that might use artistic skills, and to become visually literate.

### **University of California/California State University Guidelines**

The description of the UC/CSU systems' Visual and Performing Arts Admission Requirements offers guidelines in identifying acceptable visual art courses. Their guidelines and a list of acceptable visual art courses follow:

**Acceptable and Unacceptable Courses.** Courses which are primarily recreational, athletic or body conditioning, or for social entertainment, are NOT acceptable visual or performing arts courses. Commercial courses or courses specifically designed for training for a profession in these areas are not acceptable. See specific examples below.

**Visual Art.** *Examples of acceptable courses include* painting, drawing, sculpture, art photography, printmaking, video/film production as an art form, contemporary media, ceramics, and art history. *Examples of unacceptable courses include* craft courses, mechanical drafting, web page development, yearbook, and photography offered as photojournalism (i.e., as a component of yearbook or school newspaper publication).

## **Policy Clarifications**

**Performance, Production, and Studio Courses.** Courses emphasizing performance and/or production (e.g., drama, dance, music, visual arts, and video production) must include appropriate critical/theoretical and historical/cultural content, as referenced in the state VAPA Content Standards. Such courses should emphasize creative expression, not rote memorization and/or technical skills.

**Appreciation, History, and Theory Courses.** Appreciation, history, and theory courses should focus on the ability to make aesthetic judgments about art works and performances and must include all component strands of the state VAPA content standards, including creative expression.

**Design Courses.** Visual and performing arts courses in design are expected to provide substantial time for students to understand, learn, and experience the elements of art and principles of design that underlie the medium/media addressed. Design courses must also include standards from all five strands of the VAPA content standards.

**Technology Courses.** Visual and performing arts courses that utilize technology must focus primarily on arts content. If the technology (i.e., software, equipment) is used as a tool of artistic expression, as a paintbrush would be used in a painting course, and all other component strands are adequately met, then such courses are acceptable. If the technology/software is so complex that the primary concern becomes learning the technology, then the course will not be approved to meet the VAPA requirement.

## **Student Outcomes in Visual Arts**

Following is a recommended checklist of student outcomes to use in evaluating the content of visual arts courses. It is intended as a reference for certifying a course to grant visual arts credit for meeting the graduation requirement of one year of visual or performing arts. It is also to be used as a reference to determine whether a course offered as an alternative to taking a visual arts course to meet the graduation requirement offers the essentials of a visual arts course. The CAEA recommends that students taking a year of visual or performing arts for graduation achieve all of the following outcomes.

Standards-based instruction in visual arts is designed to ensure that students reach the proficient level of achievement in each of the five strands of the content standards: artistic perception; creative expression; historical and cultural context; aesthetic valuing; and connections, relationships, and applications. The content standards establish the basis for curriculum development and professional development for those involved in visual and performing arts programs.

### **Artistic Perception**

#### *Develop Perceptual Skills and Visuals Vocabulary*

1.1 Identify and use the principles of design to discuss, analyze, and write about visual aspects in the environment and in works of art, including their own.

1.2 Describe the principles of design as used in works of art focusing on dominance and subordination.

#### *Analyze Art Elements and Principles of Design*

1.3 Research and analyze the work of an artist and write about the artist's distinctive style and its contribution to the meaning of the work.

- 1.4 Analyze and describe how the composition of a work of art is affected by the use of a particular principle of design.

#### *Impact of Media Choice*

- 1.5 Analyze the material used by a given artist and describe how its use influences the meaning of the work.
- 1.6 Compare and contrast similar styles of works of art done in electronic media with those done with materials traditionally used in visual arts.

### **Creative Expression**

#### *Skills, Processes, Materials, and Tools*

- 2.1 Solve a visual arts problem that involves the effective use of the elements of art and the principles of design.
- 2.2 Prepare a portfolio of original two- and three-dimensional works of art that reflects refined craftsmanship and technical skills.
- 2.3 Develop and refine skill in the manipulation of digital imagery (either still or video).
- 2.4 Review and refine observational drawing skills.

#### *Communication and Expression Through Original Works of Art*

- 2.5 Create an expressive composition, focusing on dominance and subordination.
- 2.6 Create a two- or three-dimensional work of art that addresses a social issue

### **Historical Cultural Context**

#### *Role and Development of the Visual Arts*

- 3.1 Identify similarities and differences in the purposes of art created in selected cultures.
- 3.2 Identify and describe the role and influence of new technologies on contemporary works of art.

#### *Diversity of the Visual Arts*

- 3.3 Identify and describe trends in the visual arts and discuss how the issues of time, place, and cultural influence are reflected in selected works of art.
- 3.4 Discuss the purposes of art in selected contemporary cultures.

### **Aesthetic Valuing**

#### *Derive Meaning*

- 4.1 Articulate how personal beliefs, cultural traditions, and current social, economic, and political contexts influence the interpretation of the meaning or message in a work of art.
- 4.2 Compare the ways in which the meaning of a specific work of art has been affected over time because of changes in interpretation and context.

#### *Make Informed Judgments*

- 4.3 Formulate and support a position regarding the aesthetic value of a specific work of art and change or defend that position after considering the views of others.
- 4.4 Articulate the process and rationale for refining and reworking one of their own works of art.
- 4.5 Employ the conventions of art criticism in writing and speaking about works of art

### **Connections, Relationships, and Applications**

- 5.1 Design an advertising campaign for a theatre or dance production held at a school, creating images that represent characters and major events in the production.
- 5.2 Create a work of art that communicates a cross-cultural or universal theme taken from literature or history.

#### *Visual Literacy*

- 5.3 Compare and contrast the ways in which different media (television, newspapers, magazines) cover the same art exhibition.

### *Careers and Career-Related Skills*

5.4 Demonstrate an understanding of the various skills of an artist, art critic, art historian, art collector, art gallery owner, and philosopher of art (aesthetician).

### **References**

*2001 Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards*. Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2004.

*2004 Visual and Performing Arts Framework*. Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2004.

*Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership, 2002.

*Handbook of Research and Policy in Art Education*. Edited by Elliot Eisner and Michael Day. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association, 2004.

*No Child Left Behind*. Washington, DC: United States Government, 2002. [Retrieved on April 30, 2005. <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml>]

*The Arts Education Program Toolkit: A Visual and Performing Arts Program Assessment Process*. Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001.

*This is Art: A Position on High School Visual Art Courses*. California Art Education Association, 1991.

### **Resources**

The following state documents for planning arts programs and art courses are available online and directly from the California Department of Education, CDE Press, Sales Unit, 1430 N Street, Suite 3207, Sacramento, CA 95814 (916) 445-1260 <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/>

*2001 Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards*

*2004 Visual and Performing Arts Framework (includes CD ROM)*

*The Arts Education Program Toolkit: A Visual and Performing Arts Program Assessment Process*. 2001

*Arts Work—A Call for Arts Education for All California Students*. 1997

*Literature for the Visual and Performing Arts Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*. 1996

*Prelude to Performance Assessments in the Arts, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*. 1993

*The Results of the Arts Work Survey of California Public Schools*. 2001

### **Organizations**

California Alliance for Arts Education (CAAE)

<http://www.artsed411.org/>

California Arts Assessment Network (CAAN)

<http://www.teachingarts.org/CAAN/>

California Art Education Association (CAEA)

<http://www.caea-arteducation.org/>

California Dept. of Education, Visual & Performing Arts

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/vp/>

Model Arts Program (MAP)

<http://www.teachingarts.org/MAP/>

The California Arts Project (TCAP)

<http://csmp.ucop.edu/tcap/>

The National Art Education Association (NAEA)

<http://www.naea-reston.org/>