

Comprehensive Arts Education

Comprehensive arts education (also known as discipline-based arts education) is a conceptual approach, not a prescribed curriculum. It is taught as an essential component of general education and as a foundation for specialized arts study.

The goal of comprehensive arts education is to develop students' abilities to understand and appreciate the arts by:

- exploring the nature and meaning of the arts (aesthetics),
- responding to the arts (criticism),
- discovering contexts of art works (history), and
- creating works of art (production and performance).

Curriculum is:

- written with sequentially organized content at all grade levels,
- developed around enduring ideas and works of art from Western and non-Western cultures from ancient to contemporary times,
- structured to provide creative inquiry from four perspectives (aesthetics, criticism, history, and production), and
- organized to increase student learning and understanding while recognizing appropriate developmental levels.

Full implementation of a comprehensive arts education program is marked by:

- systematic and regular arts instruction, arts education expertise, administrative support, and adequate resources, and
- student achievement and program effectiveness, which are confirmed by appropriate evaluation criteria and procedures.

Blending teaching practices often thought of as separate, comprehensive arts education expects instruction in the arts — and in any art form — to:

- include knowledge and skills in creating or performing, aesthetics, criticism, and history and culture;
- integrate with other subjects around important themes or big ideas; and
- use the set of practices that have come to be called “constructivist” or “inquiry-based” and that adjust to the diverse learning styles of students, especially those at risk of educational failure.

For more information, see:

- ArtsEdNet, the J. Paul Getty Trust, www.getty.edu/artsednet.

- Southeast Center for Education in the Arts, The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, www.sceaonline.com.
- Stephen Mark Dobbs, *Learning In and Through Art: A Guide to Discipline-Based Art Education*, J. Paul Getty Trust, 1998. ISBN 0-89236-494-7