

The Arts (2002)

Years 1 to 10 Sourcebook Guidelines (Part 3 of 12)

Note: The PDF version of this document has been split into sections for easier download. This file is Part 3 of 12.

Learners and learning in The Arts

Learning in, through and about Dance, Drama, Media, Music and Visual Arts provides students with multiple pathways to express and communicate ideas and feelings.

When planning for learning and assessment opportunities, teachers should consider the varying cultural, social, geographic, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds of their students. Teachers should recognise students' prior learning and build on the knowledge, skills and understanding developed through Years 1 to 10.

Characteristics of learners

The general physical, emotional and intellectual characteristics described below are included to enhance understanding of learners at the different bands of schooling. These characteristics provide the framework for the developmental sequence of learning outcomes in the syllabus.

Early primary students

These students are active learners who tend to focus on learning about themselves and the physical and social world they experience. Students learn effectively through imaginative play and real-life and lifelike experiences with the support of peers and adults. They learn most effectively in environments where materials, spaces and time are used flexibly, where they can make choices and develop a sense of control over their learning and where they can work individually as well as with others. These students frequently need an emphasis on gross and fine motor development in their activities.

Students participating in arts learning will generally:

- express ideas and emotions spontaneously in play
- enjoy pretending, imagining and inventing
- enjoy repeating experiences as they gain a sense of increasing proficiency, flexibility and success
- explore a range of ways to express and communicate ideas, feelings and experiences
- need materials and tools that can be manipulated with early to moderate fine motor control
- enjoy activities that develop balance and coordination.

Middle primary students

Students are continuing to learn through direct experiences and are motivated by their imagination and intellectual curiosity. They are developing control of their gross and fine motor movements and are able to concentrate on prescribed activities for longer periods of time. Students work individually and cooperatively and are aware that other people can have different perspectives from their own. They accept challenges to pursue their own ideas. Their explorations also extend beyond their immediate environment to include less familiar physical, social and cultural contexts.

Students participating in arts learning will generally:

- refine and develop existing gross and fine motor skills
- work cooperatively in arts activities
- draw on a repertoire of arts processes and techniques to solve problems

- enjoy using a range of arts forms and processes to express and communicate ideas and feelings
- engage with and interpret arts works from the various social and cultural contexts in their community.

Upper primary students

Students work individually and collaboratively to develop visual, verbal, auditory and kinaesthetic responses to problems. They engage in increasingly complex and challenging tasks and negotiate perspectives with peers and adults. They control and use their gross and fine motor skills. Students are turning their attention to the outside world and are starting to show an interest in issues beyond their home cultures, local communities and contemporary life. They deal with more than one concept at a time, and are progressing in their thinking from the concrete to the abstract.

Students participating in arts learning will generally:

- collaborate and negotiate in group arts activities
- present responses in new and original ways
- be prepared to rehearse to develop technical proficiency and be willing to seek instruction and direction
- carry processes through to end products and exhibit a strong desire to achieve realistic effects
- engage with and analyse arts works from various social, cultural and historical contexts.

Lower secondary students

Students are able to think critically and to deal with abstract concepts, challenges and tasks. They are able to identify and substantiate personal preferences in arts works. They prefer active rather than passive learning experiences and respond positively to opportunities to participate in real-life situations. They work individually and collaboratively and have a strong need to belong to a peer group. Students are able to recognise that there are multiple points of view and to question the cultural and social values they experience. They have a growing sense of moral values and question perceived inconsistencies.

Students participating in arts learning will generally:

- acquire the skills needed to use new forms of expression and exploration within their self-perceived strengths
- assess arts works for the quality of the emotional experience they produce and will often be sceptical of objective judgment
- develop knowledge, skills and processes that allow them to deal with a range of artistic possibilities
- enjoy acquiring more control over materials and technologies
- have a strong commitment to personal projects and be capable of more objective self-evaluation
- work best in a supportive peer group
- understand and appreciate how particular beliefs, values and behaviours have influenced arts works and artists
- critique social, cultural and historical perspectives.

Learning in The Arts

Learning in The Arts involves aesthetic and sensory learning and cognitive, physical and social learning. In each of The Arts disciplines, students focus on the use of their senses and develop breadth and depth in a range of learning styles and modes of thinking. By engaging and reflecting within arts activities, students

develop the skills and abilities needed to use processes that contribute to their physical, cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, cultural, social, moral and spiritual development.

Aesthetic and sensory learning involves:

- engaging the senses cognitively, physically and affectively to enable students to understand the aesthetics of their own cultures and those of others
- enjoying, responding to and making judgments about experiences
- interacting with the sensory aspects of the world
- applying sensory awareness and discrimination.

Cognitive learning involves:

- using complex thinking skills and problem-solving and research skills, some of which are used in all learning and some of which are discipline specific
- developing intuitive, creative and imaginative abilities
- knowing procedures and skills and being able to automatically and rapidly apply thought processes
- using the techniques, symbol systems and processes that are central to each arts discipline.

Physical learning involves:

- control and mastery through repetition and practice
- fine and gross motor skills, coordination and spatial awareness
- muscle memory
- physical skills and techniques relevant to arts disciplines.

Social learning involves:

- interactive skills and confidence in social situations
- group dynamics and negotiating within groups as students work towards a shared goal
- personal feelings and emotional responses when engaging in and reflecting on arts experiences.

Using a learner-centred approach

A learner-centred approach views learning as the active construction of meaning and teaching as the act of guiding and facilitating learning. This approach sees knowledge as being ever-changing, built on prior experience and underpinned by understandings about the diverse cultural and social backgrounds of learners and their development, interests, needs and talents.

Teachers are encouraged to make learning meaningful to students. This can be promoted by:

- encouraging students to be active constructors of meaning
- emphasising the process of metacognition
- involving students in cooperative learning
- adopting inclusive curriculum practices.

Active construction of meaning

Students make sense of their learning in their own ways and at their own pace. They construct personal understanding as they assimilate new experiences and information from different situations and contexts. This personal construction of understanding and meaning is dependent on the prior knowledge and experience of each student and on the ways in which each student participates in learning. For students to be active constructors of meaning, they need to be consciously involved in shaping and managing their learning.

Teachers can assist students in the active construction of meaning by helping them to identify what they know and can do with what they know, and by providing them with opportunities to make connections between new knowledge and that which is already known. Prior knowledge incorporates perspectives, beliefs, values and attitudes that have been influenced by personal experiences and by cultural and social backgrounds. Teachers should acknowledge and build on this prior knowledge when planning activities.

Students can be encouraged to apply their prior knowledge, skills and understandings to new learning. Students can consolidate their learning by hypothesising and testing their understanding of new knowledge in order to become self-directed and independent learners.

Some strategies that promote an active construction of meaning in The Arts include:

- analysing and discussing the various contexts in which arts works are made and presented
- encouraging students to discover and develop their skills, abilities and creative potential as they engage in arts activities
- encouraging students to reflect on and modify their work as they make, practise and rehearse
- fostering community partnerships and community involvement in schooling
- providing activities and experiences that draw on the various sensory modes
- providing activities that have practical and real-life meaning and application for students
- providing varied and open-ended learning experiences that challenge, enrich and extend students
- providing opportunities for students to reflect on the knowledge, values, attitudes and behaviours of themselves and others
- providing opportunities for students to solve problems and make judgments in relation to information or contexts that are new to them.

Metacognition

Metacognition is the capacity to observe and analyse one's own thinking and learning processes and to apply these understandings to learning in new situations. Within the context of arts experiences, students are encouraged to develop an awareness of their knowledge and thinking processes and to take control of them. Reflection is an integral part of the learning process and should occur before, during and after the learning experience. This reflection activates the student's metacognition.

Some strategies that promote metacognition in The Arts include:

- assisting students to reflect on their behaviours and attitudes
- encouraging students to critically reflect on their own work and the work of their peers and other practitioners
- encouraging students to recognise their personal strengths and weaknesses
- providing opportunities for students to make personal choices
- providing opportunities for students to plan and monitor their learning
- providing opportunities for students to reflect on, discuss and explain their work and explore options
- providing opportunities for students to work metaphorically, abstractly and conceptually.

Cooperative learning

Cooperative learning and working collaboratively are key aspects of learning. When students work cooperatively with parents, carers, teachers, peers and school and community members, they access diverse knowledge and skills, including direct and vicarious experiences of various social and cultural groups.

Some strategies that promote cooperative learning in The Arts include:

- cultivating a learning environment that supports cooperative attitudes and collaborative practices
- encouraging peer assessment
- promoting self-reflection on personal development of cooperative attitudes and practices
- providing opportunities for group problem solving, investigating and decision making
- providing opportunities to develop and apply social skills in real-life and lifelike situations
- scaffolding students' ability to work in groups of different sizes and membership characteristics
- sharing resources
- working as part of a team to achieve shared goals.

Inclusive curriculum practices

An inclusive curriculum ensures that the learning process is accessible and meaningful to all students. This involves identifying and minimising barriers that limit students' participation in The Arts and prevent them from constructing meanings and gaining benefits from the key learning area.

An inclusive curriculum also makes learning meaningful by including and valuing the diversity of perspectives and experiences that students bring to learning experiences. This diversity should be considered in terms of the interrelated and cumulative impacts of students' social, cultural, linguistic, geographic and economic circumstances, as well as their abilities, needs and interests.

While many of the strategies identified under an active construction of meaning, metacognition and cooperative learning contribute to inclusive curriculum practices, additional strategies that specifically target the minimisation of barriers to student participation should be considered.

Strategies that promote inclusive curriculum practices by recognising and addressing the advantages and disadvantages experienced by some individuals and groups include:

- providing learning experiences and resources that reflect and represent a range of cultures, locations, communities and perspectives
- ensuring learning experiences and resources do not inhibit any students from having access to and participating in The Arts
- providing learning experiences that develop students' acceptance of, and respect for, the diversity of people's intellectual, physical and creative abilities
- creating physical and social conditions that support the wellbeing of students and others while they are participating in learning experiences and demonstrating learning outcomes
- providing technology that enables all students to participate in learning activities
- being sensitive to personal, spiritual, religious and cultural beliefs when dealing with issues
- depicting lifestyles and activities that represent people from a diverse range of communities
- providing learning experiences that develop students' understandings of the impact that racism can have on individuals and groups
- encouraging consultation, interaction and cooperation between schools and the wider community to ensure that learning experiences are inclusive.

Specific strategies that promote inclusive curriculum practices for particular groups of students can be found in the initial in-service materials.

Equity in curriculum

The Arts key learning area supports and promotes the principles of equity. It acknowledges the cumulative and interrelated impacts that students' social, cultural, geographic and economic circumstances have on their schooling experiences as well as on their abilities, needs and interests.

The Arts learning experiences can promote students' knowledge, practices and dispositions regarding equity. A focus for learning in The Arts is the unique and diverse cultures, histories, languages and communities in Australian societies. This enables students to critically analyse art forms, processes, procedures and power relations that have the potential to work for or against individuals, cultures or societies. This, in turn, empowers students to explore and challenge values based on misinformation or stereotypes.

Learning about equity issues through The Arts involves developing the knowledge, practices and dispositions necessary to:

- empower people to participate as equals
- encourage tolerance of and sensitivity to individual differences
- encourage a climate of respect, valuing and understanding both within and beyond the school community
- empower students to develop positive self-esteem and value their life experiences
- value the diversity of knowledge and perspectives within and across a range of cultures throughout history
- explore and critique the historical, social and cultural constructions of knowledge
- explore the impact differing values, morals, ethics and views have on personal roles and relationships
- question social structures that may implicitly or explicitly disadvantage individuals or groups
- challenge, rather than accept or simply know about, social injustice
- explore contemporary social issues and critique and challenge stereotypical constructions
- critique and challenge representations of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and analyse misconceptions and stereotypes
- examine and challenge representations of women and men, masculinities and femininities, and analyse gender constructions, misconceptions and stereotypes
- challenge the injustices of social and economic poverty and understand the power of social and cultural capital
- understand how valued knowledge and power relations affect individuals, groups, communities and societies
- analyse and challenge unequal power relations and knowledge that are valued within and across various groups of people
- question and challenge social contexts that inhibit full participation of particular groups or individuals with disabilities and learning difficulties.

For further information about equity considerations in the development of curriculum refer to the Equity section of the Queensland School Curriculum Council website (www.qscc.qld.edu.au).