



NATIONAL
ART EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION

Assessment PAPERS for ART EDUCATION



SECTIONS

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Introduction

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Assessment White Papers for Art Education Senior Editor

This special series, *Assessment White Papers for Art Education*, teaches about current and established assessment practices and theories and how they are relevant to all of NAEA's membership.

Assessment refers to how we measure and appraise anticipated and unanticipated student performances, learning outcomes, dispositions, and teaching and program effectiveness (Sickler-Voigt, in press). Its practice in the visual arts is highly unique. We must be able to navigate and assess the broad spectrum of performances and dispositions in the visual arts—including artistic practices and behaviors, inquiry methods, specialized language, and the global histories of fine arts, media arts, visual culture, design, and crafts—so that students can become competent creators who possess a full range of 21st-century skills. Teaching art in today's classrooms and community settings requires that we have the necessary assessment tools and methods to measure and appraise what is most important for children, adolescents, and adults to know. Our assessments must be ongoing, valid, and reliable so that they align with learning tasks and curricular goals. We must be able to utilize assessment results to guide students in acquiring greater knowledge and skills, as well as articulate how we use assessment results to improve our teaching and supervision methods.

Each of us comes to the art education profession with different assessment skillsets, experiences, and feelings. Research in our field has demonstrated how some art educators have great concerns or indifference for assessment due to lack of training and/or having been compelled to use assessments that are ill-suited to measure performances and dispositions valued in the visual arts (Dorn, Madeja, & Sabol, 2004). Many teachers have heard statements such as "It cannot be assessed if it is not on a test." Such falsities discredit our discipline's most common practices because visual arts learning tasks are often performance-based and not assessed on tests. When negative consequences associated with assessments and evaluations are high, art educators can feel great pressures to select narrow, predetermined outcomes that discourage teachers and students from trying new processes, inquiry methods, and choice-based learning tasks. Lessons become risk-free, tried-and-true, and fully teacher-driven; they move away from the core behaviors teachers and students value most.

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As a general rule, art educators understand how the acts of taking chances and making mistakes (which sometimes occur during art production and inquiry tasks) can be important components of the learning process and lead to quality results. Art educators who are assessment literate—that is, highly proficient in assessment—know how to use assessments to guide teaching and student performances that include creating artworks, developing portfolios, experimenting with art media and processes, brainstorming ideas, and reflecting in journals (Chappuis, Stiggins, Chappuis, & Arter, 2012; Sickler-Voigt, in press). They develop comprehensive learning tasks that encourage students to be aware of and apply artistic behaviors and mindsets (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2013). When assessments are necessary for teaching evaluations, assessment-literate art educators consider strategies to make their results extend beyond compulsory exercises. Seeing the values of assessment in everyday teaching and as part of a well-rounded education, they communicate assessment results to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and policy makers. They articulate the valuable role of art education in our schools and communities and demonstrate evidence of student growth and achievements.

Recognizing the importance of quality assessments in art education, NAEA's leadership and Professional Materials Committee designed this peer-reviewed series to present the voices of art educators and students who have information to share about their effective use of assessments in classroom settings and beyond. Professional Materials Committee members provided recommendations for making the White Papers accessible to elementary, middle level, secondary, higher education, preservice, supervision/administration, and museum education divisions. As a collection of works, the White Papers are contemporary resources that assist art educators in becoming assessment-literate practitioners who will be able to select and develop the most appropriate assessments for given tasks, analyze assessment data, and interpret assessment results to inform and improve student learning, teaching, and supervision. For those already proficient in assessment, the White Papers can inspire new ideas and strengthen current assessment practices.

Sections I and II of the *Assessment White Papers for Art Education* have been structured around NAEA's strategic goals of community, advocacy, learning, research and knowledge, and organizational vibrancy to introduce assessments commonly used in art education. They identify how art educators can combine qualitative assessments (that appraise dispositions, explorations, and mindsets) with quantitative assessments (that result in numeric scores). Combined qualitative and quantitative assessments allow art educators to acquire fuller, richer understandings of what is being assessed and apply different types of assessments to suit learners' needs. These sections also discuss the roles of team-building and mentoring in assessment so that art educators feel supported as they work toward producing quality results using resources that include portfolios, dialog, self-reflection, and the Model Cornerstone Assessments.

Just like teachers, students need to know how to use assessments.

Section III identifies strategies for art educators to plan and implement quality assessments that maximize students' full potential. Student-centered assessments in the visual arts align with curricular

standards, learning goals, objectives, and desired expressive outcomes such as idea development, habits of mind, and innovation and problem-solving skills (Eisner, 2002). Assessment-literate art educators present assessments in student-friendly language; teach students how to use assessments; and explain what is being assessed, why it is being assessed, and how it is being assessed. With practice, students learn to use formative assessments to guide in-progress learning tasks so that they are better prepared to reach goals and targets measured through summative assessments. **Section IV** provides methods for art educators to analyze learning outcomes, make interpretations, and report assessment results. Its papers describe how art educators collect evidence that includes student work samples and analyze assessment data to interpret assessment results. They describe some of the ways that art educators document and visualize data to acquire necessary insights, overcome challenges, and make revisions to existing assessments and practices. **Section V** presents case studies of art educators' effective uses of assessments in diverse settings. Its papers identify art educators' roles as leaders who mentor others, give students voices, implement curricular choices, and set goals. As a collection that sheds light on contemporary teaching, learning, and assessment practices, the section offers pathways for students to become lifelong learners who are proficient in the visual arts through authentic assessments, ones that extend beyond the classroom.

In sum, this series of *Assessment White Papers for Art Education* offers a starting point for NAEA's members and the greater public to understand assessments' applications to art education (NAEA, 2015). NAEA's leadership and Professional Materials Committee invite you to use these papers to find your own pathways to assessment literacy, build upon the White Papers' scholarship to generate invigorating ideas to further theories and best practices in visual arts assessment, and advocate for fair assessments that measure and appraise what our discipline values most. ■

References

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