NATIONAL ART EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Assessment PAPERS for ART EDUCATION

SECTION II

Assessments That Promote Vibrant Learning Communities and Advocate for the Visual Arts

Model Cornerstone Assessments (MCAs): A Powerful Tool for Measuring Student Achievement in Visual Arts Education

F. Robert Sabol

"Authentic performance assessment… focuses on the ability to use relevant knowledge, skills, and processes for solving open-ended problems through responses to meaningful tasks."

Publication of the National Core Arts Standards in 2014 (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards) was accompanied by optional sample assessments called Model Cornerstone Assessments (MCAs). This model for performance assessment follows the structure and formatting of the National Core Arts Standards. It provides a resource for art educators and other stakeholders to use as a possible tool for creating standards-based assessments for their local art programs and as a resource for learning about performance-based arts assessment. The 2014 National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts and MCAs are part of an ongoing history of educational reform and development of arts assessment in the United States.

Educational reform has been a national agenda item since the founding of the American republic (Efland, 1990; Soucy & Stankiewicz, 1990). Contemporary waves of educational reform were precipitated by publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), *Toward Civilization* (National Endowment for the Arts, 1988), *Goals 2000* (U.S. Department of Education, 1994), and *No Child Left Behind* (Sabol, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). These reports touched off reforms that continue today in the areas of national and state standards, curriculum development, and assessment in the fields of general education and art education.

The National Standards for Arts Education, first published in 1994 (Music Educators National Conference), were adopted or modified by various states in the creation of their state-level curriculum standards. These standards included knowledge and skills based on the discipline-based art education model, commonly known as DBAE (Clark, Day, & Greer, 1987). Standards content was divided among the curricular areas of

F. Robert Sabol, PhD
Purdue University
bobsabol@purdue.edu

aesthetics, art criticism, art history, and art production. Although these standards were widely used, accompanying examples of assessments needed to measure learning under these standards were not commonly produced or widely disseminated (Sabol, 1994). Legislative restrictions, scarcity of state and local assessment funding, lack of visual arts assessment as a state or local priority, educators' lack of assessment training, and curriculum and time limitations were among factors that hobbled assessment development and dissemination of assessments in visual arts education at that time (Sabol, 1994, 1997, 1998; Zimmerman, 1997).

The 1994 National Standards for Arts Education were succeeded by a new generation of standards published in 2014 by the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS). NCCAS is composed of representatives from each of the professional arts education associations, including the National Art Education Association (NAEA) and other public agencies concerned with education in the arts, such as the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, The College Board, Young Audiences, and Americans for the Arts. This iteration of voluntary standards provided a new foundation for designing curriculum for visual arts education. The design of the standards utilized the curriculum model known as *Understanding by Design* created by Wiggins and McTighe (2005). Their model consists of Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions. Enduring Understandings (EUs) are commonly referred to as "Big Ideas" or those ideas and processes that are central to a discipline and have lasting value beyond the classroom. Essential Questions (EQs) are related directly to Enduring Understandings. Essential Questions enable students to probe more deeply into the meaning and implications of the Enduring Understandings. They precipitate further learning and a generation of additional questions about the Enduring Understandings.

Exploring the Standards Model

Wiggins and McTighe's model (2005) is a generic curriculum design structure that is applicable to all disciplines. In order for this model to be used to generate curriculum standards, the model had to be expanded. In designing the 2014 National Core Arts Standards, NCCAS augmented the *Understanding by Design* model consisting of Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions by adding Artistic Processes, Anchor Standards, Performance Standards, and Model Cornerstone Assessments (MCAs). The standards include four **Artistic Processes**, with knowledge and skills linked to these processes. "The Artistic Processes are the cognitive and physical actions by which arts learning and making are realized" (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2012, p. 11). The Artistic Processes include Creating, Presenting, Responding, and Connecting. **Anchor Standards** describe the general knowledge and skill that teachers expect students to demonstrate throughout their education in the arts. Anchor Standards are parallel across the arts disciplines of dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts. They represent agreed-upon ideas all of the arts hold in common. There are 11 Anchor Standards and they apply to all grade levels, thereby enabling students to expand their understanding of each of these standards as their learning progresses from grade to grade. They serve as the tangible educational expression of artistic literacy. **Performance Standards** are the indictors, identifying characteristics, or "look-fors" that students' work will exhibit and against which student achievement will be compared. Performance Standards are discipline-specific and were written for each grade level from preK through 8th grade, with three performance levels at the secondary level: Proficient, Accomplished, and Advanced.

Developing the Model Cornerstone Assessments

As the 2014 National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts were being written, it became apparent that they would create a significant shift in learning for art education programs across the nation. Publication of the standards produced a unique opportunity to examine new approaches for measuring student achievement under these standards. It was equally apparent that examples of assessments were needed to demonstrate how measurement of learning under these standards might be structured (Sabol, 2006; Shuler, Brophy, Sabol, McGreevy-Nichols, & Schuttler, 2016; Zimmerman 1997). It also was understood that art educators in the field possessed varying degrees of knowledge about assessment practices and equally varying degrees of mastery of the skills needed to design assessments (Dorn, Madeja, & Sabol, 2004; Herpin, Washington, & Li, 2012; Nickerson, 1989; Sabol, 2006, 2010; Zimmerman, 1997). For these and other reasons, NCCAS decided to create assessment tools or examples of assessments called **Model Cornerstone Assessments** (MCAs) to support art educators' work in developing standards-based assessments for their programs and schools.

Because of the unique nature of learning in the visual arts, NCCAS decided to create authentic performance assessments. Authentic assessments differ from standardized and alternative measures in that they are performance-based and include real-life decisions and behaviors of professionals in a discipline. Although authentic assessments and performance assessments are viewed as being synonymous by some (Dorn et al., 2004; Shuler et al., 2016; Zimmerman, 1997), others suggest that authentic assessments replicate the real world whereas performance assessments are contrived to determine whether students can use information learned in practical applications (McMillan, 2001; Tileston, 2004). For the purpose of designing MCAs, both ideas were embraced in that a contrived task can determine whether students can use the information, but discussion of how the information is or could be used in the real world is a critical aspect of fully understanding applications of the information. Armstrong (1994) characterized authentic performance assessments as legitimate because they are intellectually challenging but responsive to the student and the school. Authentic performance assessment does not focus on factual knowledge as an end in itself. Rather, it focuses on the ability to use relevant knowledge, skills, and processes for solving open-ended problems through responses to meaningful tasks. Another key factor that distinguishes authentic performance assessments from traditional assessment tasks is that they provide opportunities for students to integrate many kinds of learning and are not dependent upon lower-level thinking skills and problem-solving abilities.

The MCAs were modeled after "Cornerstone Tasks" developed by McTighe and Wiggins (2011). Although the standards include grade-level divisions, MCAs were not written for each grade level. Examples of MCAs were written for the elementary, middle, and secondary levels with three MCAs written for the secondary level: Proficient, Accomplished, and Advanced. The secondary MCAs were designed based on the numbers of art courses students have completed at the secondary level. Therefore, the Proficient MCA was designed for students who are in their first art course at the secondary level. The Accomplished MCA was designed for students in their second art course and the Advanced MCA was designed for students in their third or higher art course at the secondary level.

Exploring the MCA Model

Model Cornerstone Assessments (MCAs) serve as anchors for the curriculum. They identify the most important performances that students should be able to demonstrate with acquired content knowledge and skills. These performances are captured in the Artistic Processes described in the standards: Creating, Presenting, Responding, and Connecting. MCAs are intended to engage students in applying these processes and the knowledge and skills for each process described in the standards in authentic and relevant contexts. For example, students at the secondary proficient level are asked to examine contemporary works of art and identify themes of the artwork (Responding) and compare them with social, cultural, or political issues in their own lives (Connecting) and then make a work of art using a contemporary artmaking approach (Creating) that will be shown in a student-created exhibition of the artworks (Presenting). In this example, students are called upon to use higher-order thinking (e.g., evaluation) and habits of mind (e.g., persistence) in order to achieve successful results. The authenticity and complexity of MCAs is what distinguishes them from the de-contextualized, selected-response items found on many tests. MCA tasks serve as more than just a means of gathering assessment evidence. These tasks are, by design, "worth teaching to" because they embody valuable learning goals and worthy accomplishments (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2012, p. 15).

The MCA model incorporates the structures and content detailed in the standards model. The MCAs are parallel in construction and design with the standards. They also demonstrate how each of the Artistic Processes identified in the standards and their related Performance Standards can be assessed through valid and reliable performance-based measures. MCAs are *not mandatory*; they are optional tools art educators may elect to use. MCAs may be used exclusively or in combination with other existing assessment methods and tools art educators currently use to measure student achievement in their programs. However, the MCAs provide a standards-based and research-based example of one possible approach, among others, for assessing standards-based student learning outcomes and expressive capacities of art students.

MCAs consist of seven distinct components: (1) Title and Short Description of the Assessment; (2) Strategies for Embedding in Instruction; (3) Detailed Assessment Procedures; (4) Key Vocabulary, Knowledge, and Skills; (5) Strategies for Inclusion; (6) Differentiation Strategies; and (7) Resources and Scoring Devices. A design template with these components is provided for art educators' use on the NCCAS website.[1] Art educators may use all or any combination of these components in designing their own MCAs.

Depending on choices art educators make regarding available options for MCA designs, the MCA model is capable of producing an array of quantitative and qualitative data that can be used to measure student performances as well as curricular design, instructional methodologies, and course and program design. These data and data summaries can be shared with administrators, parents, and other stakeholders and decision-makers to illustrate how students and programs are performing relative to the standards and for advocacy initiatives.

Teams of preK through secondary art educators and researchers created, piloted, and benchmarked sample MCAs. They produced MCAs for 2nd, 5th, and 8th grades with three additional assessments—Proficient, Accomplished, and Advanced—designed for use at the secondary level. Numbers of art educators from across the country piloted and benchmarked the MCAs between 2015 and 2016. Sample portfolios of benchmarked student work from each of the MCAs were posted on the NCCAS website for public examination.[2] The posted MCA benchmarked portfolios provide a range of examples of the quality, complexity, and comprehensive nature of learning in the visual arts as illustrated in the MCA tasks and student works in the portfolios. Benchmarked MCA works also may be used for instructional purposes or as a means for comparing various students' work and their growth over time. Using MCA student products also may enhance advocacy and other calls for public demonstrations of quality learning in visual arts education programs. In these ways MCA responses can serve additional purposes that go beyond simply capturing students' achievement.

MCAs may be characterized by a number of attributes they possess (McTighe & Wiggins, 2011; National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2012). "They:

- are *curriculum embedded* (as opposed to externally imposed);
- *recur over the grades*, becoming increasingly sophisticated over time;
- establish *authentic contexts* for performance;
- assess *understanding and transfer* via genuine performance;
- *integrate 21st-century skills* (e.g., critical thinking, technology use, teamwork) with subject area content;
- evaluate performance with established *rubrics*;
- engage students in *meaningful learning* while encouraging the best teaching;
- provide content for a student's portfolio (so that they graduate with a *resume of demonstrated accomplishments* rather than simply a transcript of courses taken).[3]

Using the MCA Model

The MCAs are flexible in their design. They may be used as intact assessments, or they may be modified at the discretion of the art teacher. For example, the sample MCAs include all four of the Artistic Processes. Art educators may choose to assess their students under each of these processes in one combined assessment. However, the MCA model also permits art educators to select one or more of the Artistic Processes and focus assessments specifically on those processes alone.

Art Educators who have used the MCAs in their programs reported dramatic positive impact on student learning and engagement with art education content. MCA-piloting art teachers at all instructional levels reported higher levels of student engagement, more sophisticated critical thinking and problem solving, combined with higher student motivation and personal connection with art learning. One teacher said that her students asked when they would be able to do the MCAs again because they enjoyed them so much. Another reported that students said they felt that for the first time, they had a choice in how they could demonstrate what they had learned in the art classes. Because piloting art teachers experienced the impact of the MCA model on student learning, many of those teachers created additional MCAs for their other grade levels and classes. They also suggested that educators' adoption of the MCAs influenced their curriculum development, instructional practice, student motivation, and uses of assessments for enhancing student learning and achievement in visual arts education programming. The demonstrated impact of MCAs on enhancing the quality of art education programming, as well as the use of the outcomes of MCAs as demonstrations of student achievement in the visual arts, hold significant power in illustrating outcomes of student learning and for advocating for visual arts education programming.

NCCAS has learned many things from art educators' uses of the MCAs in their programs. Feedback from art educators has been used by NCCAS to evaluate the real-world application of MCAs in art programs. In the future, development of additional MCAs may be undertaken, including expanded focuses on student processes and better understanding of the impact MCAs have on curriculum development, instructional methodology, and refinement of assessments designed by art educators. Other emerging understandings from the field, about how well MCAs function and how they might be improved, is a very real goal that will continue to be examined and pursued by all who implement and use Model Cornerstone Assessments in their art programs. ■

References

Armstrong, C. L. (1994). *Designing assessment in art*. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.

Clark, G. A., Day, M. D., & Greer, W. D. (1987). Discipline-based art education: Becoming students of art. *Journal of Aesthetic Education, 21*(2), 129-193.

Dorn, C. M., Madeja, S., & Sabol, F. R. (2004). *Assessing expressive learning.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Efland, A. (1990). *A history of art education: Intellectual and social currents in teaching the visual arts*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Herpin, S. A., Washington, A. Q., & Li, J. (2012). Improving the assessment of student learning in the arts—State of the field and recommendations. Retrieved from www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/WestEd.pdf

McMillan, J. H. (2001). *Essential assessment concepts for teachers and administrators.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

McTighe, J., & Wiggins, G. (2011). Cornerstone tasks. Retrieved from http://nccas.wikispaces.com/file/view/McTighe%20on%20Cornerstones.pdf/459643012/McTighe%20on%20Cornerstones.pdf[4]

Music Educators National Conference. (1994). *National standards for arts education: What every young American should know and be able to do in the arts.* Reston, VA: Author.

National Coalition for Core Arts Standards. (2012). *National core arts standards: A conceptual framework for arts learning.* Retrieved from www.nationalartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/NCCAS%20%20Conceptual%20Framework_0.pdf

National Coalition for Core Arts Standards. (2014). *National core arts standards*. Retrieved from www.nationalartsstandards.org

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

National Endowment for the Arts. (1988). *Toward civilization: Overview from a report on arts education.* Washington, DC: Author.

Nickerson, R. S. (1989). New directions in educational assessment. *Educational Researcher, 18*(9), 3-7.

Sabol, F. R. (1994). A critical examination of visual arts achievement tests from state departments of education in the United States. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 56*(2A), 9518525. (University Microfilms No. 5602A).

Sabol, F. R. (1997). An introduction: Standardized testing and authentic assessment research in art education. In S. LaPierre & E. Zimmerman (Eds.), *Research methods in art education* (pp. 137-169). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.

Sabol, F. R. (1998). What are we testing?: Content analysis of state visual arts achievement tests. *Visual Arts Research, 24*(1), 1-12.

Sabol, F. R. (2006). *Professional development in art education: A study of needs, issues, and concerns of art educators.* Reston, VA: National Art Education Foundation.

Sabol, F. R. (2010). *No child left behind: A study of its impact on art education*. Reston, VA: National Art Education Foundation, National Art Education Association.

Shuler, S. C., Brophy, T. S., Sabol, F. R., McGreevy-Nichols, S., & Schuttler, M. J. (2016). Arts assessment in an age of accountability: Challenges and opportunities in implementation, design, and measurement. In H. Braun (Ed.), *Meeting the challenges to measurement in an era of accountability* (pp. 183-216). New York, NY: Routledge and National Council on Measurement in Education.

Soucy, D., & Stankiewicz, M. (1990). *Framing the past: Essays on art education*. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.

Tileston, D. W. (2004). *What every teacher should know about assessment*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

U.S. Department of Education. (1994). *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *No child left behind.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (expanded 2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Zimmerman, E. (1997). Authentic assessment research in art education. In S. D. LaPierre, & E. Zimmerman (Eds.), *Research methods and methodologies for art education* (pp. 149-169). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.

Endnotes

1 www.nationalartsstandards.org

2 www.nationalartsstandards.org

3 See p. 15 at www.nationalartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/NCCAS%20%20Conceptual%20Framework_4.pdf

4 Link was active at time of writing, but all free and classroom wikis were disabled and no longer accessible as of 7/31/18.

National **Art Education** Association
901 Prince St., Alexandria, VA 22314
www.arteducators.org

NATIONAL ART EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Assessment PAPERS for ART EDUCATION

SECTION II

Assessments That Promote Vibrant Learning Communities and Advocate for the Visual Arts

Changing Mindsets About edTPA: From Test Anxiety to Demonstrating Teacher Competencies Through Authentic Teaching and Assessment Practices

Debrah C. Sickler-Voigt

> **"Lessons driven by a central focus often combine content inspired by a big idea, art production and inquiry methods, artists, media, design qualities, and subject integration."**

Teacher education programs in 40 states require teacher candidates working toward visual art certification to take edTPA, a high-stakes summative performance assessment developed by Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity (SCALE) and distributed by Pearson's Evaluations Systems (Pearson Education, 2018). Since its implementation in 2013, edTPA has been aligned with accreditation and teacher candidates' requirements for program completion, graduation, and/or teacher certification. edTPA's implementation arose in response to the teacher accountability movement, with its standardized measures designed by SCALE as valid predictors of preservice teachers' abilities to effectively instruct preK-12 students on their first day of teaching (Pecheone, Whittaker, & Klesch, 2017). For its visual arts assessment, art education specialists have provided input in developing and updating its requirements, resources, and rubrics that address concepts of best practices within the field and content derived from the National Visual Arts Standards. Teacher candidates submit an original portfolio that contains evidence demonstrating their teaching competencies.

Creating the wealth of data required for edTPA portfolios can feel overwhelming to teacher candidates, including high-achieving ones. Test anxiety expands beyond traditional paper-and-pencil tests and includes diverse forms of assessment and evaluation for which teacher candidates need to perform at proficient or above proficient marks for success. Test anxiety affects individuals cognitively and physically, with symptoms that include stress, nervousness, restlessness, and other discomforts

Debrah C. Sickler-Voigt, PhD
Middle Tennessee State University
arteducation.us@gmail.com

(Cizek & Burg, 2006). In extreme circumstances, test anxiety can be so debilitating that it causes competent people to perform below their normal capabilities. This is particularly true when stakes are high, as with standardized assessments.

For edTPA, teacher candidates' portfolios must include original lesson plans that they teach sequentially, related assessments, quality exemplars of student works, and instructional video footage that documents how they teach students. Teacher candidates must also prepare nearly 30 single-space pages (maximum) of written commentaries that explain and self-assess the planning, instruction, and assessment segments within their edTPA portfolios. Trained scorers that include certified art educators and professors in teacher education assess candidates' full portfolios using edTPA's 15 rubrics.

Although the edTPA Visual Arts handbook clearly explains its requirements and how edTPA scorers assess portfolios, teacher candidates need supplemental guidance and mentoring before the assessment takes place. As a teacher educator, I have initiated comprehensive curricular methods (Sickler-Voigt, in press) and developed a support system for preservice art educators that make the performance assessment a more natural experience through which teacher candidates can showcase their skills with teaching portfolios that have value beyond edTPA and focus on what they would normally do given quality preservice learning experiences. This White Paper identifies constructive approaches that assist teacher candidates in preparing for the teaching profession while also taking edTPA.

Being The Best Teacher I Can Be: Applying Authentic Teaching Practices to Guide edTPA Portfolio Development

Instead of presenting edTPA as a "test" that teacher candidates have to take, I encourage preservice art educators to shift this mindset and ask: "How can I demonstrate excellence in curricular planning, instruction, and assessment?" I regularly ask teacher candidates to reflect on the professional beliefs and ambitions that make them want to become teachers as I present theories and best practices associated with comprehensive planning, instruction, and assessment in the visual arts. I introduce these tasks early in the preservice curriculum so that teacher self-reflection becomes an important part of their professional development. We discuss the meaning of authentic instruction and assessment practices. Authentic instruction identifies what it means to be a quality teacher who cares about students' needs and develops a meaningful curriculum and assessment practices that connect to students' lives (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005).

By seeing students as valuable members of the learning community, art educators using authentic methods become familiar with students' interests and varying abilities. Classroom learning environments are communicative and well-managed, with students having ample opportunities to participate in inquiry-driven and choice-based learning tasks. Art educators apply ongoing assessments, including authentic assessments that have value in the classroom and beyond. With practice, teacher candidates learn how to apply these practices to demonstrate their roles as authentic teachers who are skilled in explaining why their standards-based instruction and assessments are necessary to student learning and how they provide students with meaningful choices to thrive as unique individuals in preK-12 art classrooms and beyond.

As promoted in authentic instruction, edTPA reflective commentaries must include evidence that identifies how teacher candidates support students' active learning. Many practicing art educators plan and instruct using big ideas, essential questions, quality visuals, media, and context that prompt student engagement and reflections. Curricular content relates to students' life experiences and has valid community and cultural connections. Art educators select developmentally appropriate learning tasks that challenge students, while remaining within reach. They identify when students need further assistance or accommodations to meet learning targets. In addition to developing clear plans and demonstrating effective instruction, teacher candidates need to know how to emulate the practices of art educators who are proficient in applying different assessment methodologies (Chappuis, Stiggins, Chappuis, & Arter, 2012; Eisner, 2002).

For example, formative assessments that occur during learning tasks allow educators to know the proficiencies students have acquired and where they need additional support as they prepare for summative quantitative assessments that result in numeric scores and measure students' abilities to reach objectives. Teacher candidates should also be able to use qualitative assessments to appraise student dispositions through sources that include communications, observations of students working and interacting, reflections during class critiques, student artists' statements, and student journals.

It's Not All New to Me: Building on My Existing Knowledge

A helpful strategy for reducing test anxiety associated with edTPA portfolio development is for teacher candidates to identify what they already know given their collective art education, studio, and education courses and applicable life experiences. Well before they take edTPA, I have students work in teams to review the edTPA handbook and ask questions about content they do not understand and discuss ways to transfer their accumulated knowledge and dispositions to real world teaching scenarios. Together we review edTPA's meanings and students begin to recognize how oftentimes seemingly new words and concepts have connections to theories and practices they already know. We discuss ways to select the most appropriate terminology, theories, and practices that suit their teaching needs and styles so that their future edTPA commentaries will reflect who they are as human beings and developing art educators. I recommend that students collect books and keep notebooks, journals, electronic files, glossaries, and word banks as references for incorporating academic vocabulary, artistic processes, inquiry methods, theories, and best practices.

Examples of quality resources include the National Visual Arts Standards and their framework of creating, presenting, responding, and connecting (State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education, 2014); the Model Cornerstone Assessments; and the National Art Education Association's professional publications. We discuss ways to

get to know the students they will be teaching during their residency/student teaching semester and the communities and cultures to which those students belong so that they can make relevant connections and integrate them into their planning, instruction, and assessment practices. The preservice art educators identify ways to align their understandings of applicable children's development theories (Sickler-Voigt, 2015). As the program progresses, I also have the preservice art educators film and assess their teaching prior to edTPA. Many are surprised by how a camera can initially make them feel uncomfortable, but they grow more comfortable and prepared with practice.

edTPA calls upon teacher candidates to develop portfolios with a central focus. Lessons driven by a central focus often combine content inspired by a big idea, art production and inquiry methods, artists, media, design qualities, and subject integration. All content has relevance to teaching the visual arts and extends beyond basic exercises with valid assessments that measure and appraise student learning outcomes. When first practicing writing edTPA's planning, instruction, and assessment commentaries with a central focus, teacher candidates may neglect to include the necessary details because they assume that scorers already know what they are talking about. I explain to teacher candidates that their thorough descriptions of selected terms, theories, philosophies, and assessments serve as teaching tools that allow others to understand their intentions and meanings. I provide guidance in helping teacher candidates teach students age-appropriate academic art vocabulary that aligns with a central focus and learning tasks. For example, they can emphasize active art verbs and actions as they work with students to describe, analyze, interpret, and judge art in oral and written forms. Other ideas include developing open-ended questions, readings, and prompts that stimulate students to ask further questions; explaining content in their own words; pointing to visual evidence in artworks and during demonstrations; and comparing and contrasting artworks and ideas.

Yes, I Can!: Maintaining Positive Dispositions

Teacher candidates must prepare their edTPA portfolios after teaching all day and attending university seminars. During this exhausting process, it is helpful for teacher candidates to envision how they will reach their professional goals and practice positive self-dialog using motivational phrases, such as "I can do this!" With goals and positive mindsets in place, teacher candidates will need to create and stick to a schedule to keep up with the vast workload. I recommend that they identify possible obstacles that can hinder their performance and seek ways to eliminate or reduce negative thoughts through methods such as deep breathing, healthy lifestyle choices, and utilizing mentors.

Like all humans, teachers sometimes make mistakes. Standing in front of a classroom and reviewing edTPA video footage of their teaching, teacher candidates will notice areas for improvement. Sometimes they are too harsh on themselves and their mistakes in their written commentaries. In assessing practice commentaries that they have written, we discuss constructive ways to describe how their planning, instruction, and assessment can be improved without being overly critical of themselves and the students they teach. Using people-friendly language, teacher candidates should identify their mistakes or disappointments and express how they have grown from the experience using self-reflection and supports from established educational theories and practices. They should also mindfully integrate their personal strengths and the quality outcomes, learning patterns, and positive dispositions that students accomplished under their guidance.

Teacher candidates need to know how to make their edTPA experiences personally meaningful with a life that extends beyond passing the performance assessment. I encourage teacher candidates to integrate content from their edTPA portfolios into their existing teaching portfolios to use on job interviews. Teacher portfolio content can include examples of their original edTPA lesson plans, student work, and assessments. Using the self-reflection skills that they have developed, teacher candidates will have a strong foundation they can apply to describe the relevance of their portfolios using multiple forms of evidence and to showcase their full teaching abilities.

Conclusion

Because edTPA functions as a teacher accountability assessment required by many teacher education programs, I strive to make the edTPA experience positive for teacher candidates. Instead of centering on edTPA's pros and cons as much scholarship does (Goldhaber, Cowan, & Theobald, 2016; Madeloni, 2015; Pecheone, Whittaker, & Klesch, 2017), this White Paper explains my role in supporting teacher candidates and helping them reduce test anxiety as they prepare for edTPA using authentic instruction and assessment practices (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Nelson & Knight, 2010).

Like many art educators in teacher education, I prefer evaluating teacher candidates' abilities without them having to pay additional funds for a mandated, privatized standardized assessment. I also recognize how edTPA's comprehensive approach challenges teacher candidates to self-reflect on their planning, instruction, and assessment. Therefore, with the teacher candidates I mentor and supervise, I approach edTPA's preparation as a community of learners and focus on the values of knowing what teachers and students can achieve given quality planning, instruction, and assessment practices, while at the same time highly valuing art educators as unique individuals. ■

References

Anderson, T., & Milbrandt, M. (2005). *Art for life*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

Chappuis, J., Stiggins, R., Chappuis, S., & Arter, J. (2012). *Classroom assessment for student learning: Doing it right—using it well* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Cizek, G. J., & Burg, S. S. (2006). *Addressing test anxiety in a high-stakes environment: Strategies for classrooms and schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Eisner, E. (2002). *The arts and the creation of mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Gorlewski, J. (2016). Foreword: Who decides and why it matters. In T. J. Gurl, L. Caraballo, L. Grey, J. H. Gunn, D. Gerwin, & H. Bembenutty (Eds.), *Policy, professionalization, privatization, and performance assessment: Affordances and constraints for teacher education programs* (pp. v-viii). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

Goldhaber, D., Cowan, J., & Theobald, R. (2016). *Evaluating prospective teachers: Testing the predictive validity of the edTPA*. Working Paper 157. Washington, DC: National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research.

Madeloni, B. (2015). edTPA: Doubling down on whiteness in teacher education. In B. Picower & E. Mayorga (Eds.), *What's race got to do with it? How current school reform policy maintains racial and economic inequality* (pp. 167-182). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Nelson, D. W., & Knight, A. E. (2010). The power of positive recollections: Reducing test anxiety and enhancing college student efficacy and performance. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *40*(3), 732-745.

Pearson Education. (2018). edTPA. Retrieved from www.edtpa.com

Pecheone, R. L., Whittaker, A. & Klesch, H. (2017). *Educative assessment & meaningful support: 2016 edTPA administrative report*. Retrieved from https://secure.aacte.org/apps/rl/res_get.php?fid=3621&ref=rl

Sickler-Voigt, D. C. (2015). *Big ideas in children's artistic development*. Retrieved from http://arted.us/development.html

Sickler-Voigt, D. C. (in press). *Teaching and learning in art education: Cultivating students' potential from pre-k through high school*. New York, NY: Routledge.

State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education. (2014). *National Core Arts Standards*. Dover, DE: State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education.

National **Art Education** Association
901 Prince St., Alexandria, VA 22314
www.arteducators.org

NATIONAL ART EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Assessment PAPERS for ART EDUCATION

SECTION II

Assessments That Promote Vibrant Learning Communities and Advocate for the Visual Arts

Using Blogs and ePortfolios to Assess Student Growth in Middle and Secondary School Art Classrooms in West Virginia: A Cross-Case Analysis

Terese Giobbia

"Blogs became valuable qualitative forms of inquiry that helped inform preservice teachers of what was most important to their students' contextual and artistic learning."

Middle and secondary school students typically spend 9 hours a day on their smart devices (Barnwell, 2016). With this in mind, art teachers can contemplate strategies to leverage this vast usage of technology to drive positive results in the classroom. Exposing students to new and engaging art activities and materials is one way educators can offer an environment that allows students to interact with and make meaningful art. Studies show that participation in the arts leads to greater engagement in school, more positive social outcomes, and enhanced cognitive and academic skills development among middle and secondary school students (National Education Association, 2012; Robertson, 2014; Slattery, 2006). This White Paper examines how three preservice teachers used blogs and ePortfolios to assess student learning, tracking the artistic journeys of the students in their classrooms. The findings of this examination illustrate how blogs and ePortfolios, when used as summative and formative assessments aligned with specific learning outcomes, can enable art teachers to better identify student progress; evaluate new idea development and literacy skills; and provide meaningful feedback to students in middle and secondary school in safe learning environments (National Education Association, 2012; Tyner, 1998).

Problem Statement

With 87% of American teens having unlimited access to smart devices, the amount of screen time middle and high school students spend on these devices has reached an all-time high (Hsukayama, 2015; Lampert, 2006; Sassman, 2015). James Steyer, CEO and

Terese Giobbia , PhD
West Virginia University
tegiobbia@mail.wvu.edu

Founder of Common Sense Media, says this statistic only proves "kids are literally living in a 24/7 media and technology world" (in Sassman, 2015, p. 1). While studies show smart devices hold vast potential for learning, art educators have become increasingly perplexed at how to incorporate them into curriculum to cultivate creativity and promote positive student learning outcomes (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010).

Monitoring artistic growth and assessing creativity among middle and secondary school students who spend most of their time texting and tweeting can be challenging for art teachers (Barnwell, 2016). Traditional portfolios—which emphasize drawing, painting, sculpture, and ceramics skills—while necessary for creating art, often are not guided by contextual considerations that take both artist intent and viewer interpretation into account (Eisner, 2004). Blogs and ePortfolios allow for these contextual considerations through the use of inquiry-based art approaches in a safe learning community where students [and teachers] "know one another, support one another, and have a sense of shared goals and values" (National Art Education Association, 2012, p. 11).

Methodology

Using the edTPA (2016) assessment model of planning, instruction, and assessment, the study followed three preservice art teachers who used blogs and ePortfolios to assess student artistic process and product. The teachers collected student artwork, digital research journals, artist statements, and self-reflections as evidence to show student progress and growth in each of the classroom settings. While each of the preservice teachers used ePortfolios and classroom blogs in different ways to assess their student's artworks, the process was well-documented and analyzed through the teachers' personal blogs. Data collection tools included observations, document review, individual student artwork and projects, artist statements, and student self-reflections.

Data Collection and Analysis

Classroom A is a middle school in a rural setting in West Virginia, with participants ranging in age from 11-14. At this site, the preservice teacher developed a collaborative material culture art lesson, which encouraged students to engage in relevant cultural inquiry through contemporary artmaking processes (Turner, 2017). Within the assignment, the teacher instructed students to create a tree sculpture out of electrical wire. The students used multicolored electrical wires found in their homes to create the sculpture. The preservice teacher presented the class with a series of contemporary artists and artworks, which enabled students to plan, brainstorm, collect materials, collaborate, reflect on, and connect with the materials and end product. The preservice teacher also created a class blog to both document student progress as well as integrate material culture into the middle school art education curricula.

Students used digital journals to take notes, brainstorm, and sketch during class and the teacher used the classroom blog to document their process. Journal prompts were often assigned with one person within the group writing on behalf of everyone during group brainstorming sessions (Turner, 2017). The entries in the blog made critical thinking more visible and showed an increased understanding of contemporary art through discussions of the medium which they used to create their wire sculptures.

As a result of this fact finding within the classroom blog, five behaviors emerged as significant to student artistic process: problem finding, problem solving, connecting, collecting, and collaborating. The preservice teacher was able to demonstrate active student engagement, analysis, and interpretation of meaning through documentation of the artistic process and critical thinking in the class blog. Unlike the technical skills of drawing and painting used with traditional media of charcoal and watercolor, unconventional artmaking materials such as electrical wire did not come with suggestions on how to use it. Students were left to their own devices to discover successful and unsuccessful ways of working with the new material, and thus found solutions, which were documented with digital imagery of student artworks, student reflections, and teacher feedback within the blog. This collection of materials was critical to the project as students had to extend artistic behavior beyond the school setting to canvass their homes for electrical cords or wires. The act of collecting unwanted or discarded common materials allowed students to experience a contemporary artistic process, enabling a greater understanding of the world around them (Freedman, 2003).

The blog highlighted a strong use of student planning—including brainstorming, sketching, and class discussions—which proved crucial throughout the project's discussions, creation, and completion. Students constructed knowledge by sharing their ideas through discussions in a classroom blog and subsequent brainstorming sessions. Equally significant was the classroom discussion on the logistics of relocating a tree sculpture from the second floor of the school to the first-floor library once the project had been completed (Turner, 2017). Planning, in this case, overlapped with problem solving. This showed a collaborative balance between the artistic process, which allowed for student ownership of duties and student-directed artmaking. The preservice teacher observed student collaboration, where students worked together in undefined groups, and "observed ways in which students worked together, switching back and forth between helping and assisting different people" (Turner, 2017, p. 63). She noted how collaboration provided a way for students to teach other students about their self-discovered solutions and/or findings (i.e., uncasing electrical cord). Additionally, students worked collaboratively to physically create the wire-wrapped tree, attach branches, and connect vines.

In Classroom B, in rural West Virginia, participants ranged between the ages of 11-14. Here the preservice teacher used student ePortfolios and a personal blog to gauge the effectiveness of open-ended and closed curriculums in two different classrooms. Using the instructional strategy of choice-based art, ePortfolios were used to carefully document student contextual learning and artistic progress. In this setting, the preservice teacher conducted two separate lessons, which focused on creating "dream house drawings."

In the first lesson, the preservice teacher purposefully chose a closed curriculum lesson:

> While students were given an opportunity to incorporate personal elements within their dream house drawing, they were only given a limited amount of creative tools, such as colored pencils, paper, magazines, glue, and scissors. The visual images of student artworks captured in the blog depicted more traditional reproductions of houses. (Drennon, 2017, p. 57)

In the second lesson, students were introduced to the concept of found object art:

> For this project, students were told they could utilize any material or object that was available to them, and were given access to fully stocked shelves with found objects and a variety of art materials. The blog documented their research of looking for meaningful objects to put in their dream houses. [Because they were given] choices of alternative artmaking materials, students approached the project with greater vigor and youthful enthusiasm. (Drennon, 2017, p. 58)

Collected images and artist statements in individual student ePortfolios demonstrated how creativity was hindered when closed curriculum instruction strategies were used. When students were given a written curriculum with a set of instructions and no choice of medium or materials, ePortfolios highlighted how students ended up telling the same visual story, where all the projects looked, felt, and acted the same (Drennon, 2017). Instead of creating personal narratives, students simply regurgitated what teachers instructed them to create. Alternatively, in the open-ended curriculum where students were given choices of materials and media for artmaking activities, the preservice teacher's blog highlighted the risks students took within their art activities—pencil drawings and Zentangles—to create art based on their own personal narratives. Specific to this setting, the preservice teacher also assembled a group of art educators, practicing artists and university supervisors to judge the creativity of each of the art images. The individuals were prompted with a question of which image they found to be more creative, and why. The panel rated student artwork based on performance descriptors of creativity, craftsmanship, formal resolution of design elements, and the impact on student progress and how "creativity" flourished (Drennon, 2017). The preservice teacher shared the results of the survey in her personal blog, noting how it demonstrated that when students were given choices, they were able to enjoy creating art through their own storytelling.

While ePortfolios documented the day-by-day artistic process and enabled the preservice teacher to assess student growth within the artworks, the preservice teacher's personal blog enabled her to gather information through pre-assessments of original thumbnail pencil drawings and to post assessments of their final projects of the Zentangles. While there was some disparity in the rankings the panelists gave student artwork, the collected data suggested that using blogs and ePortfolios helped students to take greater risks in their artmaking as they were more willing to share their failures and successes with their peers and teachers.

In Classroom C, a large secondary school serving several small towns and communities in rural West Virginia, student participants ranged between the ages of 15-18. Surrounded by coal mines and refineries, the level of poverty and unemployment was high. In this setting, the preservice teacher used a personal blog, student digital journals, and ePortfolios to highlight ways in which art activities could help students deal with some of their social and emotional stressors. Drugs, bullying, violence, and abuse were just some of the many social stressors students in this setting faced daily. The preservice teacher utilized her own personal experiences and observations of others using art approaches in the K-12 classroom to design a curriculum that used a personal blog to document her personal reflections on her student's progress and growth.

The art lessons the preservice teacher formulated employed color therapy and action painting approaches, as well as a combination of traditional artmaking activities—such as resource journals, paintings, drawings, and three-dimensional papier-mâché products—which were later inputted into their ePortfolios (Rubin, 2010). The ePortfolios the students created provided meaningful insight into the lives of students. They allowed the preservice teacher to communicate directly with the students in a confidential and non-threatening way as she addressed the problems they were experiencing. In her own personal blog, the preservice teacher noted how the color therapy project had allowed her to glance at what her students were dealing with on a daily basis. She observed that often times showing color in their work represented what was going on within their environment and what battles their families were going through. She also noted a lack of color in their artworks seemed to indicate how uncertain they were about their future or what was going to happen next (Elliott, 2017).

What became apparent in all of these school settings was the inherent value of using these specific technology tools to provide students with an opportunity to think in new ways (Eisner, 2002). In each of these settings, the preservice teacher used ePortfolios as a form of inquiry-based learning to evaluate critical thinking disposition among students; this became an effective way for students to communicate their problems to a teacher in a safe environment (Eisner, 2002). The student ePortfolios highlighted how art affected their minds, helped them form alliances with the preservice teacher and with other students, and often helped the students through sometimes difficult stages of their lives. The preservice teachers' blogs became personal journals, where each identified the specific art approaches she used with each individual learner and was able to reflect on specific art approaches she had used that helped her students cope with stress and trauma.

Findings

Smart devices play an increasingly important role in providing students with opportunities to learn how to think in new ways (Eisner, 2004; Robb, Bay, & Vennegaard, 2018; Sassman, 2015). The findings of this cross-case analysis appear to suggest that blogs, when used as formative assessments, and ePortfolios, when used as summative assessments, can be powerful tools to monitor social and artistic development among middle and secondary school students.

Preservice teachers in this study demonstrated ways to assess student progress and provide meaningful feedback to middle and secondary school students through the use of blogs and ePortfolios. Preservice teachers were able to see and assess student growth and process in the classroom blogs, which highlighted students' problem-finding, problem-solving, connecting, collecting, and collaborating abilities. Likewise, artist statements accompanying artwork in ePortfolios and comments in the personal blogs provided preservice teachers with assessment tools to gauge student successes, failures, and artistic process and progress.

In Classroom A, the preservice teacher's blog captured the day-to-day visible artistic and conceptual growth throughout the process of making a tree sculpture out of wire. The panel of cooperating teachers, practicing artists, and university supervisors who viewed and evaluated the ePortfolios in Classroom B commented on the higher levels of quality with regard to craftsmanship, resolution of formal qualities, and creativity among students' completed works. In Classroom C, ePortfolios highlighted personal narratives that emerged within the art activities and artist statements accompanying ePortfolios and provided meaningful insight into the lives of students, some of whom were dealing with daily personal social stressors. In each of the three settings, the blogs became valuable qualitative forms of inquiry that helped inform preservice teachers of what was most important to their students' contextual and artistic learning. From a teacher's perspective, the technology promoted interactive learning communities that enabled students to take ownership of their work. It also appeared to encourage collaborative learning outcomes between students and teachers in the middle and secondary school art classroom.

As is the case with many schools across the United States, the standardization of the school environment has led to an abundance of students looking to their art teachers for answers on what to create instead of reflecting internally for the answer (Slattery, 2006). When students are allowed to use these technology tools to make personal choices, they are able to enjoy creating art through their own storytelling and personal narratives in a positive and safe environment. These technology tools help students collaborate with peers, maintain open dialogue with teachers, and create more personal and meaningful artworks, while giving art teachers the opportunity to view artistic process, assess student progress, build a sense of community through collaboration and interaction, improve literacy skills, and allow students to take risks within a safe learning environment. ■

References

Barnwell, P. (2016, April 16). Do smartphones have a place in the classroom? *The Atlantic* website. Retrieved from www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/04/do-smartphones-have-a-place-in-the-classroom/480231/

Drennon, E. (2017). *A comparison of open ended and closed curriculums in a secondary school art classroom* (Master's thesis, West Virginia University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (10683765)

EdTPA. (2016). *Visual Arts Handbook*. Washington, DC: Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity. [PDF]. Retrieved from http://edtpa.aacte.org

Eisner, E. (2002). *Arts and the creation of mind*. Yale University Press: New Haven, CT.

Eisner, E. (2004). What can education learn from the arts about the practice of education? *International Journal of Education & the Arts, 5*(4), 1-13.

Elliott, A. (2017). *A discussion of art therapy approaches used in classroom activities to help students with emotional and behavioral issues* (Master's thesis, West Virginia University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (10616079)

Freedman, K. (2003). *Teaching visual culture: Curriculum, aesthetics and the social life of art*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Hsukayama, H. (2015). Teens spend nine hours every day consuming media. Retrieved from www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2015/11/03

Lampert, N. (2006). Critical thinking dispositions as an outcome of art education. *Studies in Art Education, 47*(3), 215-228.

National Art Education Association. (2012). *Learning in a visual age*. Reston, VA: NAEA. Retrieved from www.arteducators.org/advocacy/learning-in-a-visual-age

National Education Association. (2012). *Preparing 21st century students for a global society: An educator's guide to the "four Cs."* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from www.nea.org/assets/docs/A-Guide-to-Four-Cs.pdf

Rideout, V., Foehr, U., & Roberts, D. (2010, January).Generation M2: Media in the lives of 8-18 year olds [Scholarly project]. In *Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation*. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED527859.pdf

Robb, M. B., Bay, W., & Vennegaard, T. (2018). *The new normal: Parents, teens, and mobile devices in the United Kingdom*. San Francisco, CA: Common Sense.

Robertson, I. (2014, January 3). Can smartphones reduce your creativity? Retrieved from www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-winner-effect/201401/can-smartphones-reduce-your-creativity-0

Rubin, J. (2010). *Introduction to art therapy: Sources and resources*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, Routledge.

Slattery, P. (2006). *Curriculum development in the postmodern era*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

Sassman, B. (Director). (2015, November 3). *The number of hours teens are spending on smartphones may surprise you* [Video file]. Retrieved from www.commonsensemedia.org

Turner, E. (2017). *Using material culture lessons to cultivate artistic behaviors and enrich students' conceptual understanding in an urban middle school classroom* (Master's thesis, West Virginia University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (10616241)

Tyner, K. (1998). *Literacy in a digital world: Teaching and learning in the age of information*. Mahawk, NJ: Lawrence Ehrlbaum & Associates.

National **Art Education** Association
901 Prince St., Alexandria, VA 22314
www.arteducators.org