

multiple levels of the program, such as the rhythm and tonal syllable systems used in music classrooms.

Determining The Number Of Objectives

There is no fixed rule to determine the correct number of objectives for a grade or course, but there are important practical considerations to bear in mind. Objectives must be specific enough to provide direction for day-to-day instruction and assessment, but few enough to be attainable and to be meaningfully grasped by teachers. It is unreasonable, for example, to expect students in an elementary dance class which meets only twice weekly, for a maximum of 72 class sessions per year, to master 100 culminating grade level objectives. Similarly, it is unreasonable to expect teachers to monitor, much less teach, so many objectives. Breaking student learning into too many discrete components also tends to trivialize the learning described, by obscuring the larger goals.

One approach is to write objectives by systematically building them on specific standards, departmental goals or artistic processes. For example, a curriculum team might choose to write one objective for each Connecticut performance standard at each grade level [see South Windsor music curriculum framework for Grade 7 in Appendix F-1], or it might organize its objectives around the three artistic processes [see Grade 4 excerpt from Simsbury music guide in Appendix F-2]. Teachers can pull the objectives together into a coherent package by developing units of instruction, individual lesson plans and summary assessments that address multiple objectives.

Another approach which is particularly useful for district curriculum teams that find themselves tempted to generate too many objectives is sometimes referred to as the "Big Three." A curriculum team using this approach might begin by asking each teacher to answer the question: "If you could ask students to carry out three tasks which would demonstrate that they had mastered the core of what you wanted them to learn as the result of their required sequence of study in your subject (usually K-8), what would those tasks be?" The tasks can be complex, requiring the students to synthesize what they have learned, and can take place over time, such as over the course of a multilesson unit.

In a sense, the "Big Three" approach begins by asking teachers to describe their culminating projects or assessments. Then, as teachers describe the qualities they would look for in the work that students would submit on those projects or assessments, they end up describing their objectives in observable terms. This approach tends to yield fewer, yet "richer" or more complex objectives, expressed in the form of "culminating" activities that call for students to synthesize and apply their learning. The approach helps curriculum writers avoid the mistake of

listing numerous objectives describing discrete, small-scale behaviors.

Once "core" learning has been identified through the "Big Three" process, curriculum team members should cross-check their work against guidelines such as the Connecticut standards to ensure that they are providing adequate breadth (scope) over time, perhaps by listing sequential skills and content in a scope and sequence chart (see section titled Developing a Scope and Sequence on page 184).

Organizing Objectives

One of the challenges that faces every curriculum development team is designing an organizational scheme for presenting objectives on paper. There is no single, ideal solution to this problem because curriculum is a multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be fit neatly on the two-dimensional surface of printed paper. Districts must, therefore, identify the format which seems most useful.

There are many ways of organizing objectives. The ultimate choice will depend on:

- the way the team chooses to organize its program, such as by grade levels, strands or units (see discussion of common organizational schemes, below);
- the additional components it chooses to list with the objectives, such as suggested materials and other resources, and assessment and instructional strategies; and
- the ways the guide will be used (as a day-to-day teaching reference, for developing interdisciplinary units, etc.).

Regardless of how objectives are organized, they must progress sequentially over time, from one grade level or course to the next. During the writing process, and preferably in the final guide, it is helpful, therefore, to align the objectives so that it is possible to see how they progress from one level to the next. A horizontal layout, such as that used for the standards on page 127, can be useful for this purpose. Some district curriculum teams create large wall displays or use continuous rolls of butcher paper to chart this "articulation" or sequence.

Among the most common organizational schemes are the following:

- a *grade-by-grade* structure, the single most common approach, which organizes objectives by grade level or, in electives, by course or sequence of courses.
- organization by *units*, which groups objectives by main topics or by sustained projects which occur during a particular grade level or course; and

- organization by *strand or goal*, which places all of the objectives for a specific topic or goal in a sequential order. Such an organizational scheme helps teachers sequence classroom instruction within the strand or goal. It is also a useful format for curriculum writers, so they can ensure that objectives progress sequentially over time.

These approaches often are used in combination. For example, most curriculums are organized by grade or course; within those grades, objectives often are grouped by each strand or goal that they address. This organizational approach is more difficult when districts write comprehensive objectives – i.e., objectives that require students to synthesize a broader range of learning – because such objectives tend to address multiple goals. In such cases, some curriculum teams find it helpful to organize their objectives by units within each grade or course. In the unit approach, objectives sometimes take the form of comprehensive descriptions of the qualities desired in students' culminating projects for each unit.

Developing A Scope And Sequence

Educators use the term *scope and sequence* in two very different ways. The term is most commonly used to refer to the entire breadth and content of a district's grade-to-grade objectives in a particular subject area, which can be a lengthy document. Other educators use the term "scope and sequence" to refer to a concise, usually one- or two-page overview of how the objectives and/or content of a program evolve over time, often presented in chart form.

Some districts begin the process of writing objectives by using state and national standards to anchor their expectations for Grades 4, 8 and 12, then move immediately to developing a content scope and sequence. Such a chart does not list grade-to-grade objectives but, rather, helps curriculum writers ensure that they are covering important concepts, media, artists and other aspects of content. They then flesh out the rest of the program by developing objectives and other materials for each course and grade. An excerpt from a detailed scope and sequence developed in this manner by the Simsbury Visual Arts Department can be found in Appendix E-1. This chart, which the district referred to as a "curriculum matrix," outlines the content studied at each grade level; the elements of design, references (including particular artists), media skills and principles of design that are to be addressed; and the titles of the units of study through which they can be taught. In a sense, this is a more detailed version of the art content chart, excerpted from National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) documents, which is reprinted in Appendix I-4.

The briefer, "overview" type of scope and sequence is useful in communicating with parents and other members of the community about what students should learn at each grade level. Teachers sometimes find that a concise scope and sequence also helps them step back from the details of the curriculum and see the "big picture," because they must not only help their students master the objectives for a particular grade or course but also must reinforce prior learning and lay the foundation for future learning. Arts teachers who typically teach students at more than one grade level can refer to the concise scope and sequence to remind themselves of what students in a particular grade should have mastered in earlier classes as well as what they should be preparing students to learn in future classes. An example of a one-page "overview" type of scope of sequence developed by the Hamden Drama/Theatre Department may be found in Appendix E-2.

Assessing Student Learning

The appropriate approach to assessment depends not only on the *purpose* for which the assessment occurs, but also the *conditions* under which the assessment occurs.

There are three common strategies for building assessment into curriculum.

- The criteria and strategies for assessment can be built into the objectives by writing each objective in such a way that it describes an observable task, a context (condition) for assessment, and criteria for evaluating student success on the task. (For a work sheet to facilitate this approach, including illustrative examples, see Appendix H: Turning A Standard Into Objectives And Assessment.)
- One or more separate assessment strategies can be provided for each objective. In the written document these are often presented in a row or column format, with each assessment listed next to the objective it is designed to assess. In such an approach the objectives often are general in nature, similar to standards, relying on the assessments to provide specificity. [For examples of this approach see the excerpts from the Simsbury music curriculum in Appendix F-2 and the Hamden theatre guide in Appendix F-3.]
- Assessment can be organized by unit. Districts that use this approach design each curriculum unit so that it addresses multiple objectives over a series of lessons. Each unit outlined in the guide provides assessment strategies, including scoring criteria and rubrics for key products of that unit. [For two

examples of this approach see the Middletown and North Haven visual arts units presented in appendices G-2 and G-3, respectively.]

A fourth, less common, assessment strategy is to administer either published or locally developed “standardized” tests departmentwide, either to all students in certain grades or to a randomly selected sample of students. This approach can be combined with any of the three approaches outlined above. Published tests exist for some important aspects of music learning, such as the ability to associate music notation with what is heard, but there are no truly comprehensive test batteries available for any of the arts. This is due, in part, to the fact that any comprehensive assessment of arts learning must ask students to perform and create, which are processes that do not lend themselves to pencil-and-paper testing. [For an example of a districtwide summary assessment, see the example developed by the Farmington Visual Arts Department in Appendix G-3.]

Student assessment and standard setting go hand in hand, because – as mentioned in the section titled Establishing Levels of Expectation on page 182 – the best way to clarify a standard is to select student work that exemplifies the type and level of work expected on that standard, and the best way to collect student work is to have students complete assessment tasks linked to those standards. This is another reason why assessment is an essential part of any curriculum guide.

In some cases, a performance standard will provide language that will help the local curriculum team develop assessment criteria. For example, Grade 12 music performance standard 1.a. asks that students “sing with *expression* and *technical accuracy*.” Clearly, the evaluation of high school students’ singing should be based, at least in part, on the dimensions of expressiveness and technique. Other performance standards, however, leave the development of evaluation criteria entirely to local decision makers. The most effective way to develop assessment criteria, and to set levels of expectation in relation to those criteria, is to collect and discuss student work.

A more thorough discussion of issues, strategies and references for arts assessment may be found in Chapter 5: Issues. Illustrative examples of assessment strategies and scoring scales or rubrics may be found in Appendix G, and also at the www.CTcurriculum.org website

Choosing Content Or Literature

The Connecticut standards are written to avoid dictating content or literature, but local districts must make decisions about content to write clear objectives and to ensure that all students achieve a common core of knowledge and understanding. Just as local language arts curriculum development teams choose particular literature

that all students will read, local arts curriculum teams should make choices about which “core” artists and art works (literature or repertoire) their students will study and perform.

The process of selecting content is challenging, because it requires teachers to choose a relatively small, representative sample from a very wide range of attractive possibilities. Given the massive number of artists, cultures, artistic styles and genres, and other considerations that must be taken into account, the amount of a field not covered always exceeds that which is included, and individual faculty members often have to yield on their preferred choices so their department can reach general agreement. Such agreement is necessary so that teachers in upper-grade courses can count on students having learned certain core concepts, information and skills in lower-grade classes. Only when teachers can count on students having mastered a common foundation of learning can they plan instruction that moves those students forward. Agreement also is necessary so the school district can purchase and provide all teachers and students with copies of the art works selected, such as visual art images, music recordings, scripts, videos and films.

Curriculum developers should apply several criteria when selecting art works for study.

- The primary consideration in selecting art works for study should be whether studying that work will *help students master the objectives* outlined in the curriculum. Through studying and/or performing each work, students should develop understandings or skills that the local school district has identified as being important.
- Teachers should select works for study that are of the highest possible *artistic quality*. Students must experience, research, describe, analyze, discuss, critique and perform artistic literature that provides them with models of excellence. Clearly defining in words what constitutes artistic quality is a difficult task, but expert artist/teachers will recognize and select well-crafted, expressive artistic work.
- Works selected for study or performance must be *developmentally appropriate*. The developmental appropriateness of artistic literature is determined not only by its technical demands, such as the level of skill required to perform it, but also by the maturity of understanding it demands. Performance requires technique, and different works require different levels of technical proficiency. Attempting to perform works that place excessive technical demands on

students prevents them from devoting time to developing and expressing an interpretation. Works for performance should be selected that stretch, but do not exceed, the students' technical and intellectual capabilities. Works studied also must fall within the students' level of cognitive and emotional development. For example, a particular slow and lyrical piece of music might be well within the technical grasp of an ensemble of middle school students, but because of their ages the students might lack the maturity to fully appreciate the work's expressive potential and bring to it life in performance. A work of theatre might include dialogue that is well within high school students' vocabularies, but deal with issues for which they lack necessary life experiences. Intellectual demands also should be taken into account when choosing artistic literature.

- The collective body of works studied should provide sufficient *depth in at least one or two "core" styles* in which students can develop expertise. Such expertise takes the form of a kind of personal "syntax" for the conventions of each style, and empowers the student to be freely expressive within those styles. The core styles also are those in which students will be best prepared to create new work, such as through improvisation or choreography. Because these styles constitute the core of the program, it is important to select them with care. For example, the focus of many American music programs is to help music students develop an aural syntax for Western art and folk music styles. Music programs help students hear resting tones and detect melodic errors in major and minor tonality, apply traditional Western rules of harmonization, maintain a steady beat within duple and triple meters, and assimilate other conventions of Western European music.
- It is important for students to experience a variety of styles of art, but insisting on covering too wide a range of content in too little instructional time can lead to superficial experiences that trivialize learning and prevent depth. Once the core styles have been identified, it is helpful to identify *one or two contrasting styles* in which the students will develop secondary expertise. In other words, if – as is typically the case – the core of the curriculum focuses on a traditional Western style of art, then it is effective to select for extended study one or two other very different styles, including at least one non-Western style, that provide clear contrasts. Such contrasts enable students to make comparisons and broaden their understanding of the arts discipline.
- When selecting contrasting styles for extended study, as well as when selecting styles that will be introduced for shorter periods of time to provide breadth, arts curriculum teams should take into account the *cultures and historical periods studied in other subjects*, such as the social studies and language arts. By coordinating content across subject lines, teachers can deepen and broaden students' learnings in all subject areas. For example, the arts curriculum team may want give special attention to the music of Japan in Grade 5 if the social studies curriculum for that grade also focuses on Japan. By consciously creating such parallels, curriculum teams make it possible for teachers in different disciplines to plan together to enhance learning. There are, however, cases where the content of one subject does not match well with that of another. If, for example, students at Grade 5 could deal readily with key social studies issues relating to Japan, but were not developmentally ready for key musical concepts from that country, the music teacher might opt not to try to link the two curriculums. Teachers who plan coordinated units should ensure that the content in each subject area is developmentally appropriate and helps students achieve the goals and objectives of each discipline.
- The *interests and cultural heritage of the students* also should be taken into account when selecting content. Students' interests play an important role in their attitudes toward content, and in their willingness to elect secondary classes. Most dance educators, for example, have decided that a modern dance focus is more appropriate for reaching a large public school student population than a classical ballet focus. If a community has a large population of a particular ethnic or cultural heritage, the content should affirm and draw on that heritage. For example, an arts program in a community with a large Hispanic population should help students understand Hispanic art. Regardless of whether students identify with traditional forms of art from their ancestral homelands, studying that art can affirm their sense of pride and self-worth.
- The *availability of appropriate resources* is an important consideration when selecting content. Once curriculum development teams

have developed a long list of possible content choices, one consideration when narrowing that list should be whether quality learning resources can be found. Because there is a shortage of commercially available examples of dance on video and film, districts should try to include styles for which visual examples can be provided. Similarly, the fact that there is a dearth of music arranged for band and orchestra from many ethnic traditions will limit the scope of instrumental music literature studied.

Communities will differ in the choices of artists and repertoire their students study, based on decisions they make when applying these criteria. Individual teachers in a district also should be allowed to introduce favorite artists and works beyond the core literature as time permits and as dictated by student interests and needs. The bottom line in selecting core artists and literature is that choices should help students master the goals identified in the curriculum guide.

Sometimes issues will arise around arts content. Two common areas of controversy include religious content, particularly around holidays, and censorship. These topics are discussed further in Chapter 5: Issues. (For examples of music repertoire lists, see the Grade 4 song literature in Appendix F-2 and the ensemble repertoire cycle in Appendix K.)

School districts may find it useful to refer to existing guidelines when selecting repertoire. The content tables in Appendix I, which are reprinted from the assessment specifications for the 1997 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the Arts, provide useful ways of organizing the content of an arts area to ensure that teachers address an appropriate variety of important age-appropriate concepts and literature. Districts are encouraged to use the NAEP schema as references during their own decision-making processes.

Each NAEP table represents only one of several appropriate divisions of a discipline, however, so districts are encouraged to consider alternative ways of organizing content. For example, the Farmington, Conn. visual arts faculty decided to organize content in three categories: representational, abstract and nonobjective art. Each year students in that district study selected artists and art works from all three categories and apply the concepts learned by creating their own art work. (See excerpt from the Farmington visual arts guide in Appendix G-3.)

The dance guidelines for NAEP (Appendix I-1) organize the field into three general categories, incorporating familiar dance styles, such as ballet and modern dance, in the category of Western theatrical dance.

It should be noted that the music guidelines for NAEP (Appendix I-2) were constructed to guide the overall program, and may not be equally appropriate for each strand. For example, the wealth of available choral literature from various cultures makes it possible for choirs to include a significant percentage of music outside the Western tradition; the relative dearth of such literature for band or orchestra will lead most instrumental teachers to place a greater emphasis on Western music. To provide their students with a broader perspective, instrumental ensemble teachers will need to adopt strategies such as finding arrangements of non-Western music, bringing in relevant non-Western listening examples, and – when practical – forming special ensembles to perform varied types of music. (To address these issues, several local school boards have established policies regarding content (for an example, see South Windsor’s policy in Appendix L.)

Designers of the theatre portion of NAEP chose to divide the content of their field by identifying categories of potential stimuli for theatrical work, including scripts for traditional “on-stage” theatre, traditional stories, film and television, and miscellaneous other sources (see Appendix I-3).

The NAEP visual arts team chose to balance dual criteria for content by providing guidelines for both the origins of work (geographic, cultural and historical) and the media and processes used (two- and three-dimensional, wet/dry, traditional/high tech, etc.).

Step 7: Identifying Necessary Resources

Resources should be provided based on what students should learn, not vice versa. That is, conversations about curriculum should begin by identifying student needs, not by saying “you have this much instructional time, this schedule and these pieces of equipment, so go figure out what you can do.” Once goals and objectives have been clarified, it is possible to identify those resources that would support optimal learning.

Some curriculum teams choose to list recommended materials in a column next to objectives and corresponding teaching strategies; others identify necessary materials, but list them in a separate section of the document. Many curriculum teams choose to present in the introduction to their guide the assumptions about instructional time and facilities on which they have based their student objectives. Some equipment needs are explicit in the objectives, such as when music objectives call for students to compose music on MIDI keyboards and electronic synthesizers. Other equipment needs are implied, such as when art objectives call for students to learn to glaze pottery, thereby implying that students will have access to a kiln to fire the pottery. It is wise to make all

needs explicit by including a list of necessary resources in a local guide.

Equipment and supply needs also derive from recommended assessment strategies. For example, preserving student visual art work for portfolios requires either cameras and photographic film or the ability to digitize and store that work on computers. Preserving student musical performances requires audio equipment and storage media, such as cassette decks and tapes; preserving student dance and theatre performances requires video recorders, tape and film. For further information about resources necessary to support effective arts education programs refer to Chapter 3.

Step 8: Developing A Medium-Range Implementation Plan

When resources do not permit immediate implementation of the new or revised program, or when considerable staff in-service training is needed before a program can be delivered, districts should create a plan for implementing the program in stages.

When implementing a program over a period of time longer than one school year it is generally best to begin with the lower grades, gradually moving the new program up through the grades over a period of two or three years. When new technology or equipment must be purchased it is best to begin purchasing units of that equipment in year one to spread out expenses and allow faculty members the time to develop proficiency in their use. However, given the life expectancy of a curriculum, **it is inappropriate to spread implementation over more than two or three years**; otherwise, the district will find itself back at the point in the curriculum cycle when it needs to evaluate and revise the program before that program has been fully implemented.

Staff development and supervision are critical components of every phase of the curriculum process,

from vision making to design to implementation to revision. Regardless of when necessary instructional time, materials and equipment are provided, the staff development and supervision components of program implementation should continue throughout the life of the curriculum document.

Step 9: Piloting And Refining The Guide

Quality curriculum guides are living documents that evolve over time – in a sense, they are always in draft form. The process of revision is most intensive while a guide is actually being developed, as faculty members try out and refine ideas, but it continues long after a guide has been declared “finished” and presented to the local school board for approval. Effective teachers are always learning and growing and are, therefore, always experimenting with their curriculums.

Districts should pilot sections of a guide as they are being written. For example, when new content or skills are proposed for a particular course or grade, faculty members should try teaching them to the appropriate age group to get a sense of what is possible. Similarly, new assessment strategies and materials should be piloted with children before being included in a guide. Regardless of the care curriculum teams apply when developing the guide, however, flaws and potential refinements demanding revision will inevitably surface as it is implemented.

Program improvement, including revision of the guide, should be an ongoing focus of district faculty meetings and in-service sessions. As student work is collected to illustrate the learning expectations set forth in the new guide and teachers learn to set higher standards for their classes, objectives and assessments in the guide should evolve. Faculty learning experiences, such as in-service workshops or summer courses, may reveal new developments in the field or new technologies that spark a desire for change.