

Connecticut's Common Arts Assessment Initiative

Connecticut State Department of Education

The goal of Connecticut's Common Arts Assessment Initiative is to develop common tools to measure student learning of *visual art* and *music* standards at the district and school levels. The pilot and final versions of the assessments will be available to teachers on a voluntary basis in order to:

- monitor and improve student learning in the arts;
- ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn in the arts; and
- promote collaboration and exchange of instructional ideas among teachers

The pilot and final versions of the assessments will also be available to districts as tools to monitor and improve student learning in the arts, including the ability to compare learning across schools and districts.

In keeping with the principles of *backwards design*, the final versions of the assessments that are developed will inform the development of the next generation of Connecticut arts standards.

Connecticut's common arts assessments are:

- developed by arts educators;
- based on the knowledge and skills outlined in Connecticut's *arts standards*;
- aligned with the NAEP framework – i.e., *3 Artistic Processes* of creating, performing, and responding;
- focused by adding *content* expectations; and
- *practical*, to be useful in a range of art and music classrooms.

The final arts assessment tools will include:

- Multiple means of assessing student learning, including authentic performance tasks as well as on-demand items;
- Scoring tools (rubrics, rating scales, checklists);
- Benchmark student work (anchor sets); and
- (Eventually) grade-by-grade benchmarks for K-8 and high school course assessments.

The assessment development process began by reviewing existing arts assessment initiatives in non-Connecticut states and districts. It is currently...

1. focusing on assessments for key grade levels: grades 8, 5, and 2 (in that order); and
2. involving arts educators statewide in:
 - developing tasks/items;
 - developing units, as appropriate, in which to embed the items;
 - piloting tasks and collecting and scoring student work;
 - reviewing and refining tasks and scoring tools;
 - selecting student work to benchmark/anchor levels on scoring tools¹; and
 - developing multiple examples of units that contribute to high student achievement, and making them available on www.CTcurriculum.org.

¹ Standard-setting will be based on what is attainable in schools that provide quality instruction for the state-recommended amount of instructional time (i.e., 60-100 minutes per week in art and music during the elementary grades; one semester per year in the middle grades).

Initiative Leadership and Contact Info

CSDE arts consultant Dr. Scott C. Shuler oversees both the music and art common arts assessment initiatives, working in collaboration with discipline-specific project chairs. Contact: scott.shuler@ct.gov, (860) 713-6746.

- The *music* assessment initiative is chaired by Richard Wells, retired Simsbury performing arts supervisor. Contact: RWells@simsbury.k12.ct.us, (860) 485-1077.
- The *visual arts* assessment initiative is chaired by Gail Edmonds, retired Middletown visual arts coordinator. Contact: gpedmonds@yahoo.com.

Draft tasks are posted and updated periodically on the arts education web pages of the CSDE web site: [Standards, Guide, Common Assessments, Advocacy, Survey, etc.](#)

Timeline

February 1, 2007 Connecticut Association of Arts Administrators (CAAA): The collaborating member districts of CAAA resolved that the Connecticut's next statewide curriculum priority in arts education will be to ***develop common assessments to measure student art and music learning at the district and school levels.***

June 25-29, 2007: Statewide arts curriculum and assessment institute at Fairfield University focused on developing common assessments for district and school use.

2007-08 School Year

- Steering Committees in art and music participated in developing and piloting performance tasks
- Teams of arts educators in steering committee districts provided input into refining and pre-piloted performance tasks for students in grades 8 and 5
- Training began toward developing on-demand (selected response) items

2008-09 School Year

- Piloted and refined first set of grade 5 and grade 8 tasks
- Developed and pre-piloted new grade 5 and 8 performance tasks in art and music, and two grade 2 music tasks
- Continued training on development of on-demand items

2009-10 School Year

- Field tested and benchmarked mature tasks in grades 2, 5 and 8
- Posting completed tasks with anchor sets on SDE arts web site and CTcurriculum.org
- Pre-piloted and refined grade 8 Digital Media and grade 5 3-D Clay tasks in visual art

2010-11 School Year

- Pilot and benchmark grade 8 Digital Media and 3-D Clay tasks in art; post on SDE arts web site and CTcurriculum.org
- (Possible) Develop content matrix for on-demand tasks
- (Possible) Train on-demand item developers and begin creating items

Content of Assessments: Status and Plans

Performance Tasks

Performance tasks are designed as units with embedded assessment, to be administered and scored locally. Statewide standards are being established by refining common analytic and holistic rubrics, supported by benchmark (anchor sets of) student work illustrating levels of achievement from “emerging” to “advanced.”

Creating Units/Tasks (includes student reflections and self-analysis)

- Music Grade 2 – Improvisation: duple meter call-and-response
- Music Grade 5 – Composition: 8 measures notated, with optional setting of text
- Music Grade 8 – Composition: ABA, highlighting unity/variety and tension/release
- Art Grade 5 – Fantasy Landscape: A Giant Just Stepped into a Fantasy World
- Art Grade 5 – 3-Dimensional Clay: Carving a Narrative in Pottery (Piloting 2010-2011)
- Art Grade 8 – Self-portrait: Incorporating Personal Symbols, in Mixed 2-Dimensional Media
- Art Grade 8 – Digital Media: Narrative Collage (Piloting 2010-2011)
- In all Creating tasks students describe, analyze, and reflect on their own work

Performing Units/Tasks

- Music Grades 2, 5, and 8 – Singing (will develop future instrumental performing option in grade 8)
- In all Singing tasks students self-critique; in grade 5 and 8 tasks, students also write recommendations for improving their own work

Responding Components in Creating and Performing Units/Tasks

- Descriptive: using vocabulary to describe art works accurately
- Analysis: moving from description to understanding
- Classification with support
- Interpretation
- Critique of example(s) of artwork and, at upper grades, offer recommendations for improvement
- Measurement of responding will be built into on-demand assessment (see below)

On-Demand Items

On-demand items will complement **Responding** elements embedded in Creating and Performing Units/Tasks. Ultimately, on-demand items will be administered on-line, at least in grades 5 and 8.

Content will be based on a content matrix that outlines key components such as:

- Media
- Subject Matter
- Arts Creators (composers, choreographers, visual artists, playwrights)
- Movements
- Historical Periods
- Cultures

Content may be either based around or built into one or more model art and music guides that are provided for districts' voluntary use.