



PARENTS' GUIDE TO THE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS GRADES 6-7-8

Dance • Music • Theatre • Visual Arts

Snapshot of Arts Learning in Middle School

When sixth, seventh and eighth grade students have attained basic knowledge and skills in the four arts disciplines of dance, music, theatre and the visual arts throughout their elementary school years, they are prepared to refine and broaden their expressive and technical skills in the middle grades. The offerings and scheduling of arts classes in middle schools vary. Students may have choices in what classes in the arts they elect to take or they may experience the arts as part of an elective wheel in which they explore several different subjects during the school year.

During these middle years, students apply and refine their knowledge and skills in the arts so that they can express their own voice. Their self-confidence increases through this expression of their individuality.

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Increased originality and skills are exhibited in their dance choreography and performance as they realize how expressive their movements can be. In music, students apply their vocal and/or instrumental skills as they perform a varied repertoire of music as a soloist and in groups. They also learn more about composing and arranging original works. Theatre students improve their acting skills and techniques as they perform and analyze the dramatic elements used by playwrights and directors. In the process of developing a series of related works to express a personal statement, visual art students are increasing their skills and identifying what they believe to be important to look for in works of art. Students engage in more in-depth research and analysis in their arts learning.

Learning outcomes for students taking arts classes in the middle grades occur at many levels including those outcomes directly related to arts discipline content and also those goals related to 21st century skills, such as the ability to work collaboratively, technology and media literacy, creative thinking, innovation and problem solving.



Dance Content

Examples of Dance Learning in Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Grades

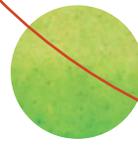
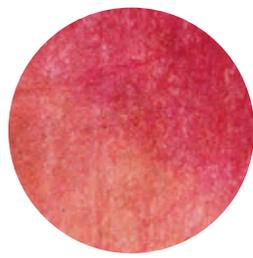
- Comparing and demonstrating the difference between imitating movement and creating original choreography.
- Demonstrating increased ability and skill to sustain longer and more complex movement sequences for expression in a variety of dance styles.
- Using appropriate dance vocabulary to analyze gestures and movements viewed in live or recorded dance performances and applying that knowledge to their dance activities.
- Identifying and performing dances from countries studied in the history/social science curriculum.
- Explaining the variety of roles dance plays among different socioeconomic groups in selected countries.
- Demonstrating an understanding of the elements of dance and the craft of choreography.
- Critiquing various kinds of dance including the most contemporary forms.

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Music Content

Examples of Music Learning in Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Grades

- Reading, writing and performing rhythmic and melodic notation, using standard symbols for pitch, meter, rhythm, dynamics and tempo in duple and triple meters.
- Singing a repertoire of written and memorized vocal literature representing various genres, styles and cultures with expression, technical accuracy, tone quality, vowel shape and articulation – by oneself and in ensembles.
- Performing on an instrument a repertoire of instrumental literature representing various genres, styles and cultures with expression, technical accuracy, tone quality and articulation, by oneself and in ensembles.
- Developing criteria for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of musical performances and compositions and applying the criteria in personal listening and performing.
- Identifying aesthetic qualities in a specific musical work and explaining how various aesthetic qualities convey images, feeling or emotion.
- Identifying and describing distinguishing characteristics of musical genres and styles from a variety of cultures.
- Explaining how music reflects social functions and changing ideas and values in the past and present times.



Theatre Content

Examples of Theatre Learning in Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Grades

- Using the vocabulary of theatre, such as action/ reaction, vocal projection, subtext, theme, mood, design and production values, to describe theatrical experiences.
- Collaborating in writing and performing scenes or one-act plays that include monologue, dialogue, action and setting with a range of character types.
- Differentiating the theatrical traditions of cultures throughout the world, such as those in Ancient Greece, China and West Africa, and explaining how cultural influences affect the content or meaning of works of theatre.
- Performing character-based improvisations, pantomimes or monologues, using voice, blocking, facial expression, timing and gesture to enhance meaning.
- Identifying and explaining how technology has changed American theatre.
- Developing criteria for and writing a formal review of a theatrical production.
- Identifying career options in the dramatic arts, such as cinematographer, stage manager, radio announcer and dramaturg, and researching the education, training and work experience necessary in those fields.

Identifying and explaining how technology has changed American theatre.

Visual Arts Content

Examples of Visual Arts Learning in Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Grades

- Discussing their own artworks and the work of others as to theme, genre, style, idea, differences in media and use of the elements of art and principles of design.
- Creating increasingly complex two- and three-dimensional original works of art that demonstrate increased technical skill and reflect a personal statement and personal choices in media, processes and ideas.
- Comparing and contrasting works of art from various time periods, styles and cultures and explaining how those works reflect the society and time period in which they were made.
- Developing and applying specific and appropriate criteria, individually or in groups, to assess and critique works of art including their own.
- Examining various visual art forms, such as photography, digital images and video, comparing how different visual representations of the same object lead to different interpretations of its meaning and describing or illustrating the results.
- Reporting on a work of art that makes a social comment or protests social conditions, including the effectiveness of the work and what the artist did to make the work communicate meaning.
- Demonstrating an understanding of the effects of visual communication media on all aspects of society (e.g., television, video, music videos, film, Internet, social media).





Talking to Your Child's Middle Grades Teacher About the Visual and Performing Arts

Visual and performing arts programs vary widely throughout the state as to what is offered, how much time is spent on arts learning and who teaches the arts. If your child has not participated in sequential arts learning in the elementary grades, it will be important to ask if he or she will have the opportunity to learn basic skills and content during these middle grades.

At the middle school level, the arts are usually taught by teachers who have a credential or certification to teach dance, music, theatre or visual arts. When you talk to your child's visual or performing arts teacher about the arts program, it will be helpful to get a clear picture of your child's opportunity to engage in arts learning and advance their skills.

You will want to ask questions regarding the school's arts program and about the visual and performing arts coursework. Below are some sample questions to ask.

Questions regarding the arts program:

- What is your child's access to instruction in the arts? Are the arts available to your child every year during the middle grades?
- Are there beginning and advanced courses in each of the arts?
- Are the arts taught by credentialed or certified instructors in dance, music, theatre, or visual arts? If not, who teaches the arts?
- Is there communication between the middle school arts teachers and the teachers at the high school my child will be attending as to how their programs are articulated so there is a smooth and logical progression of learning objectives from grade to grade?
- Are students who are particularly interested in one or more of the arts introduced to possible careers in the visual or performing arts?

Questions regarding your child's progress in visual or performing arts courses:

- What does my child particularly enjoy and/or need to work on in his or her performance in this arts course?
- Reflecting on the lists of what students will be learning in the middle grades provided in this document, what are two or three of your curricular goals for the students at this grade level?
- Are there more advanced courses available to my child in this arts discipline in the middle school grades and/or at the high school level?
- How can I support or enhance my child's learning in this arts course?

Helping Your Child Learn in the Visual and Performing Arts at School, at Home and in the Community

At school:

- Share your personal expertise through school or classroom performances, demonstrations and lessons.
- Assist with costumes and props for theatre and dance.
- Share your expertise in a folk or traditional art form with your child's class.
- Join and participate in the band support group or other groups that support one or more of the arts programs.
- Help with student performances in the arts and with exhibitions of students visual artwork.
- Offer support for the arts program by donating supplies and/or equipment.
- Help the teacher access a community artist to visit the school.

Help with student performances in the arts and with exhibitions of student's visual artwork.

At home:

- Research and watch videos of contemporary dance and folk/traditional dances from your family's heritage.
- Ask your child to teach you a song or a round then sing it together for family or friends.
- Practice acting skills for five minutes or more during which the two of you do an improvisation around an everyday experience.
- Be your child's model by sitting still while she or he draws a realist or stylized portrait of you.
- Help your child secure the instruments and materials needed for arts courses.
- Set up an "art table" for your child to work on visual arts projects.
- Talk to your child about what is being taught in the arts class.
- Have your child teach you some things that he/she is learning.
- Ask your child to describe and/or demonstrate what they are expressing or communicating in their work in the arts.

In the community:

- Support your child's learning in the arts with lessons and study outside of school at art museums or art centers, and with community dance, theatre and music groups or teachers. Some art museums have free days and activities for students and families.
- Take your child to art gallery exhibits and performances of dance, music and theatre that are appropriate for this grade level.
- Make arrangements for your child to talk to or interview visual and performing artists and to visit their studios and/or performance spaces.



Expanding or Improving the Arts Program at Your Child's School

If you want to support the visual and performing arts program in your child's school or see what you can do to strengthen arts instruction across the grade levels in your school, here are a few ideas for getting started.

- Go to the California Department of Education's Visual and Performing Arts pages starting with the following: www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ca/vp/vapaguidance.asp
- Look to the Statewide Arts Education Database to find out how your school district is doing in providing arts education to students in grades 6-12. Visit createca.net to read about the Arts Ed Data Project and search data for your school or district.
- Visit the California State PTA website to learn why a full curriculum that includes the arts is essential for all students. You'll be able to view and download free resources in multiple languages. www.capta.org
- Join PTA's SMARTS Parents for the Arts Network to receive newsletters and information directly to your inbox.
- Be a champion for the arts in your school. To get started, download an informational flier. www.capta.org/smarts
- Start or join an "Arts Now" coalition in your community, www.artsed411.org

Find more resources by contacting other statewide organizations that support arts education such as:

The California County Superintendents Education Services Association Arts Initiative

A statewide network of County Offices that believes that the visual and performing arts are an integral part of a comprehensive curriculum and are essential for learning in the 21st century. www.ccsesaarts.org

The California Alliance for Arts Education

The Alliance advocates for high quality arts education for all students by providing policy expertise and by mobilizing a statewide network of advocates and allied partners. www.artsed411.org/about_us

CREATE CA

CREATE CA is a coalition of dedicated and innovative leaders who understand that together we have the power to create lasting change for every California student. Our mission is to ensure ALL students are able to reach their full potential by advancing an education model that promotes creativity and the arts for the workforce of tomorrow. www.createca.net