

# PARENTS' GUIDE TO ARTS LEARNING IN CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS

## GRADES 9-12

Dance • Media Arts • Music • Theatre • Visual Arts

### Snapshot of Arts Learning in High School

Beginning or “proficient level” high school arts courses build on what the student has learned in the elementary and middle school grades. For those students who want to move forward in the arts, courses at the “accomplished” and “advanced” levels may also be offered. These courses provide students with opportunities to refine their skills and continue discovering and expressing themselves through the arts. Students research, analyze, question, evaluate and revise a creative body of work that reflects their own complex ideas, personal points of view and their increasing skills. Most proficient and advanced courses will fulfill a school district arts graduation requirement and college entrance requirements. Some students will take more courses to continue expanding their knowledge and skills in one or more of the arts disciplines and they may be interested in the arts as a career path. Career technical education for arts, media, and entertainment (CTE AME) builds on foundational arts learning and integrates career, technical, and arts learning and readies students for career and college. The Career Technical Education Standards for California Public Schools provide guidance for this.

Proficient and advanced courses in high school build on what your child has learned in all of the previous grades.



# Dance Education – Proficient, Accomplished, and Advanced

## Examples of Dance Learning in High School

### *Proficient Level*

- Experimenting with the elements of dance to explore personal movement preferences and strengths and selecting movements that challenge skills and build on strengths in an original dance study or dance.
- Evaluating possible designs for the production elements of a performance and selecting and executing the ideas that would intensify and heighten the artistic intent of the dance.
- Analyzing the artistic expression of a dance discussing insights using evaluative criteria and genre-specific dance terminology.
- Analyzing and discussing dances from selected genres or styles and/or historical time periods and formulating reasons for the similarities and differences between them in relation to the ideas and perspectives of the peoples from which the dances originate.

### *Accomplished Level*

- Applying personal movement preferences and strengths with the movement vocabulary of several dance styles or genres to choreograph an original dance study or dance that communicates an artistic intent.
- Performing dance studies and compositions that use time and tempo in unpredictable ways using internal rhythms and kinetics as phrasing tools.
- Comparing and contrasting two or more dances using evaluative criteria to critique artistic expression while considering societal values and a range of perspectives and using genre-specific dance terminology.
- Analyzing a dance that is related to content learned in other subjects and researching its context.

### *Advanced Level*

- Synthesizing content generated from stimulus material and then experimenting and taking risks to discover a personal voice to communicate artistic intent.
- Initiating, planning, and directing rehearsals with attention to technical details and fulfilling artistic expression using a range of rehearsal strategies to achieve performance excellence.
- Analyzing dance works from a variety of dance genres and styles and explaining how recurring patterns of movement and their relationships create well-structured and meaningful choreography.
- Investigating various dance related careers through a variety of research methods and techniques and selecting those careers of most interest to further investigate as a possible career choice.



# Media Arts Education – Proficient, Accomplished, and Advanced

## Examples of Media Arts Learning in High School

### Proficient Level

- Applying aesthetic criteria in developing and refining artistic ideas, plans, prototypes, and production processes for media arts productions, considering original inspirations, goals, and presentation content.
- Integrating various arts, media arts forms, and content into unified media arts productions, considering the reaction and interaction of the audience, such as experiential design.
- Analyzing and describing the qualities of and relationships between the components, content, and intentions of various media artworks.
- Demonstrating and explaining how media artworks and ideas relate to various contexts, purposes, and values, such as social trends, power, equality, and personal/cultural identity.

### Accomplished Level

- Refining and elaborating aesthetic elements and technical components to intentionally form impactful expressions in media artworks for specific purposes, audiences and contexts.
- Designing the effective presentation and promotion of media artworks for a variety of formats and contexts, such as local exhibits, mass markets and virtual channels.
- Analyzing the intent, meanings, and influence of a variety of media artworks, based on personal, societal, historical and cultural contexts.
- Critically investigating and proactively interacting with legal, technological, systemic, and vocational contexts of media arts, considering civic values, media literacy, digital identity, and artist/audience interactivity.

### Advanced Level

- Employing mastered artistic, design, technical, and organizational/management skills in managing and producing media artworks.
- Analyzing and synthesizing the qualities and relationships of the components in a variety of media artworks, as well as the audience impact.
- Analyzing the intent, meanings and impacts of diverse media artworks, considering complex factors of context and bias.
- Critically investigating and strategically interacting with legal, technological, systemic, cultural and vocational contexts of media arts considering the impacts upon individuals and the community.

1 in 10 jobs  
in California  
are in the  
creative  
industry\*



GRADES 9-12

\*Source: Otis Report  
[otis.edu/sites/default/files/2015\\_Otis\\_Report\\_on\\_the\\_Creative\\_Economy\\_CA.pdf](https://otis.edu/sites/default/files/2015_Otis_Report_on_the_Creative_Economy_CA.pdf)



## Music Education – Harmonizing Instruments, Ensembles, Music Composition and Theory, and Music Technology

### Examples of Music Learning in High School

Music provides four distinct strands of standards at the high school level that reflect the increasing variety of music courses offered in schools. Each of these strands provides standards at the proficient, accomplished, and advanced levels. Based on local music courses developed and approved by local school boards the standards from the strands may be integrated into one course or multiple courses.

### Examples of Learning in Harmonizing Instruments in High School from the Proficient, Accomplished and Advanced Levels

- Generating melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic ideas for compositions, improvisations, accompaniment patterns in a variety of styles, and harmonization for given melodies. (Proficient)
- Performing final versions of compositions, improvisations, accompaniment patterns in a variety of styles, and harmonization for given melodies, demonstrating technical skill in applying principles of composition/improvisation and originality in developing and organizing musical ideas. (Accomplished)
- Applying personally developed and established criteria based on research, personal preference, analysis, interpretation, expressive intent, and musical qualities to evaluate contrasting individual and small group musical selections. (Accomplished)
- Integrating and interrelating the connections between music and societal, cultural and historical contexts when creating, performing and responding. (Advanced)

### Examples of Learning in Ensembles in High School from the Proficient, Accomplished and Advanced Levels

- Composing and improvising musical ideas for a variety of purposes and contexts. (Advanced)
- Evaluating and refining draft melodies, rhythmic passages, arrangements, and improvisations based on established criteria, including the extent to which they address identified purposes. (Accomplished)
- Developing, applying, and refining appropriate rehearsal strategies to address individual and ensemble challenges in a varied repertoire of music. (Advanced)
- Evaluating works and performances based on research as well as personally and collaboratively developed criteria, including analysis and interpretation of the structure and context. (Accomplished)

Composing and improvising musical ideas for a variety of purposes and contexts.

### Examples of Learning in Composition and Theory in High School from the Proficient, Accomplished and Advanced Levels

- Describing how sounds and short musical ideas can be used to represent personal experiences, moods, visual images, and/or storylines. (Proficient)
- Researching, identifying, explaining, and applying personally-developed criteria to assess and refine the technical and expressive aspects of evolving drafts leading to a final version. (Advanced)
- Identifying and selecting specific creators' intent, movements, or entire works that express personal experiences and interests, moods, visual images, concepts, texts, or storylines in moderately complex or complex forms. (Advanced)
- Explaining the effectiveness of the technical and expressive aspects of selected music and performances, demonstrating understanding of music theory as well as compositional techniques and procedures. (Accomplished)



### Examples of Learning in Music Technology in High School from the Proficient, Accomplished and Advanced Levels

- Generating melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic ideas for compositions and improvisations that incorporate digital tools, digital resources, and digital systems. (Advanced)
- Sharing a portfolio of musical creations representing varied styles and genres that demonstrates musical and technological craftsmanship, using personally selected digital and analog tools, resources and systems in developing and organizing musical ideas. (Advanced)
- Demonstrating how understanding the context, expressive challenges, and use of digital tools in a varied repertoire of music influence prepared or improvised performances. (Proficient)
- Selecting and critiquing contrasting musical works, defending opinions based on manipulations of the elements of music, digital and electronic aspects, and the purpose and context of the works. (Accomplished)



## Theatre Education – Proficient, Accomplished, and Advanced

### Examples of Theatre Learning in High School

#### Proficient Level

- Use script analysis to generate ideas about a character that is believable and authentic in a drama/theatre work.
- Refining design choices using technical theatre elements to support the story and emotional impact of a devised or scripted drama/theatre work.
- Examining how character relationships assist in telling the story of a drama/theatre work.
- Practicing various acting techniques to expand skills in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

#### Accomplished Level

- Using personal experiences and knowledge to develop a character that is believable and authentic in a drama/theatre work.
- Discovering how unique choices shape believable and sustainable drama/theatre work.
- Developing detailed supporting evidence and criteria to reinforce artistic choices, when participating in or observing a drama/theatre work.
- Choosing and interpreting a drama/theatre work to reflect or question personal beliefs.

#### Advanced Level

- Synthesizing ideas from research, script analysis, and context to create a performance that is believable, authentic, and relevant in a drama/theatre work.
- Using and justifying a collection of acting exercises from reliable resources to prepare a believable and sustainable performance.
- Using new understandings of cultures and contexts to shape personal responses to drama/theatre work.
- Collaborating on a drama/theatre work that examines a critical global issue using multiple personal, community, and cultural contexts.

## Visual Arts Education – Proficient, Accomplished, and Advanced

### Examples of Visual Arts Learning in High School

#### *Proficient Level*

- Engaging in making a work of art or design without having a preconceived plan.
- Analyzing and describing the impact that an exhibition or collection has on personal awareness of social, cultural, or political beliefs and understandings.
- Establishing relevant criteria in order to evaluate a work of art or collection of works.
- Documenting the process of developing early stage ideas to fully elaborated ideas.

#### *Accomplished Level*

- Demonstrating acquisition of skills and knowledge in a chosen art form through experimentation, practice, and persistence.
- Analyzing, selecting, and critiquing personal artwork for a collection or portfolio presentation.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.
- Utilizing inquiry methods of observation, research, and experimentation to explore unfamiliar subjects through artmaking.

#### *Advanced Level*

- Experimenting, planning and making multiple works of art and design that explore a personally meaningful theme, idea, or concept.
- Curating a collection of objects, artifacts, or artwork to impact the viewer's understanding of social, cultural, and/or political experiences.
- Determining the commonalities within a group of artists or visual images attributed to a particular type of art, time frame, or culture.
- Synthesizing knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.

Curating a collection of objects, artifacts, or artwork to impact the viewer's understanding of social, cultural, and/or political experiences.





## Talking to Your Child's High School Arts Teacher(s) about the Arts Program

The 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 school or middle school, it will be important to ask if he or she will have the opportunity to learn basic skills and content in the high school courses.

At the high school level, the arts are taught by teachers who have a credential, certification, or the equivalent to teach dance, media arts, music, theatre or visual arts. When you talk to your child's arts teacher about the class your child is taking it will be helpful to get a clear picture of your child's opportunity to engage in standards-based arts learning to advance their skills. Following are some sample questions to ask.

### Questions regarding the arts program:

- What is my child's access to instruction in the arts? Are the arts available to my child every year during high school?
- Are there beginning and advanced courses in each of the arts?
- Are the arts taught by credentialed or certified instructors in dance, media arts, music theatre, and visual arts? If not, who teaches the arts?
- Do you have a requirement for each student to take a course in at least one of the arts for graduation from high school?
- Which of your arts courses are approved to meet the college entry requirement of a yearlong course in one of the arts?
- Are students who are particularly interested in one or more of the arts introduced to possible careers in the arts?

### Questions regarding my child's progress in the arts courses:

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

### Questions regarding your child's interest in pursuing a career in the arts:

- If your child has expressed the desire to pursue one of the arts in college and/or as a career, at the beginning of high school, sit down with your child's teachers, counselor or other advisor and discuss which courses your child should take in his or her chosen art form. Create a plan together to help your child take the courses that will lead to reaching his or her goals.
- What would be an appropriate course sequence to meet my child's goals in the arts?
- How can I help my child prepare for majoring in one of the arts in college and/or for a career in the arts?
- What extracurricular activities would be most appropriate for my child?
- What universities, colleges, or technical schools specialize in the arts discipline my child wants to pursue?

**Appendix 3 in this document provides information on the many careers your student could consider pursuing in the arts.**

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

### At school:

- Share your personal expertise in one or more of the arts through school or classroom performances, demonstrations and lessons.
- Assist with costumes, props, and/or lighting 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 or orchestra 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 or media artwork.
- Offer support for the arts program by donating supplies and/or equipment.
- Help the teacher access a community artist or media art production team to visit the school.

**Learn more about expanding or improving the Arts Education Program at Your Child's School in Appendix 1.**

**Find more resources by contacting other statewide organizations that support arts education in Appendix 2.**

### 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 he or she has learned in the music class and sing it together for family or friends.
- After watching a dramatic program on television, do a critique of it in terms of the acting, staging, costuming.
- Set up a place for your child to work on visual arts projects where they can leave their supplies and works in progress.
- Talk to your child about what is being taught in the arts class and what they still want to learn.
- Have your child teach you some things that he/she is learning in the arts classes.
- 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, with community dance, theatre and music groups or teachers, and through distance learning on the computer.
- Check the local art museum for free tours 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 remotely or in person.



# APPENDIX 1

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

If you want to support the arts program in your child's school or see what you can do to strengthen arts instruction across the grade levels, 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:  
[cde.ca.gov/pd/ca/vp](http://cde.ca.gov/pd/ca/vp)
- Look at the statewide Arts Education Data Project to find out how your school district is doing in providing arts education to students in grades 6-12. Visit [createca.net](http://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.  
[capta.org/focus-areas/education/arts-education](http://capta.org/focus-areas/education/arts-education)
- Go to California State PTA's Resource Library for Parents and Families and download amazing arts and learning resources to do at home, in school and through your local PTA. [capta.org/resource-library](http://capta.org/resource-library)
- Start or join an "Arts Now" coalition in your community.  
[artsed411.org](http://artsed411.org)

# APPENDIX 2

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

**The California County Superintendents Educational Services Association Statewide Arts Initiative** involves the infrastructure of the 58 county offices of education. This statewide initiative was formed with the belief that all California students – from every culture, geographic region, and socio-economic level—deserve quality arts learning in dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts as part of the core curriculum. The website provides many resources for teaching and learning in the arts.  
[ccsesaarts.org](http://ccsesaarts.org)

**The California Alliance for Arts Education** advocates for high quality arts education for all students by providing policy expertise and by mobilizing a statewide network of advocates and allied partners.  
[artsed411.org/about\\_us](http://artsed411.org/about_us)

**CREATE CA** is a statewide 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.  
[createca.net](http://createca.net)

