



WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Art Curriculum Review
June, 2012**

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Introduction

The Art Curriculum Review Committee met monthly throughout the 2011-2012 school year. The six member committee was comprised of members from the elementary, middle, and high schools as well a parent representative, as listed below:

Administration:

Emily Parks, Assistant Superintendent
Diane Kaiser, Director of Art

Westwood High School:

Liza Houston, Art Teacher

Thurston Middle School

Maribeth Amber, Art Teacher

Martha Jones Elementary School

Katie Thurston, Art Teacher

Parent Representative

Jody McQuillan

The goal of the art review was to recommend curriculum and programs that ensure that Westwood students have an engaging, challenging, and rewarding art education that reflects the skills and knowledge required of the 21st century learner. Throughout the process, the Committee considered the questions:

- What is the purpose of art education in today's world?
- How can we ensure that Westwood's art program best prepares students for today's increasingly visual world?

The review of Westwood's program was completed in June 2012 with the development of a revised Mission Statement for the program and the articulation of recommendations to guide future work, both immediately and in the longer term. Findings and recommendations will be reported to Superintendent Antonucci and to the School Committee in the fall of 2012.

Review Process

During the 2011-2012 school year, the Art Curriculum Review Committee examined Westwood's art program and researched best practices in art education. The work included:

- A review of the standards established by the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework as well as national standards
- A review of student program participation, student work, and assessment results
- Research on trends and best practices in art education as provided in journals and publications
- Visits to programs in area schools that were identified as employing exemplary art practices or innovative programs
- Internal surveys, designed, distributed and analyzed by the committee, to understand student perceptions of the program and perceived needs
- Extensive discussion about our current practices and curriculum implementation

Changes in Arts Education Since the Last Review

There has been a shift of focus in art education since the last curriculum review -- a shift that reflects the skills and qualities that both colleges and employers are looking for in their students and employees:

*What **was** central and drove the art curriculum:*

Content knowledge; Elements of Art and Principles of Design;
Media-specific techniques

*What is **newly** central and driving the art curriculum:*

Creative problem solving; Flexible thinking, innovation; Critical thinking;
Communication and Conveying meaning

Though content knowledge and artistic techniques remain as relevant learning targets, increasingly, art education seeks to foster the capacity to think creatively, make connections, and innovate. This shift in art education towards thinking skills aligns with general education trends reflected in the new Common Core State Standards and is reflected in the call for arts education coming from higher-education institutions, education leaders, policymakers, and the business community. For example, the Partnership on 21st Century Skills (P21) (a public-private partnership whose founding members include Apple Inc., Microsoft, Cisco Systems, AOL Time Warner, and the National Education Association) has outlined a framework for today's education that combines the "3Rs" with the "4Cs." Critical thinking and problem-solving, Creativity and innovation, Collaboration, and Communication. P21 describes specific 21st century workplace abilities - innovation, creative problem-solving, investigative habits of mind, and the ability to imagine multiple outcomes to a problem - as the skills that everyone will need to succeed as citizens and workers. Unfortunately, these are also the skills that employers and colleges say are now severely lacking among high school graduates and entering students. Quality arts education develops and reinforces those skills viewed as critical for success in the new global economy.

The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities recently completed an 18-month study of art education and its effect on student success. Their report, *Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools*, was published in May 2011 and reflects this new focus in arts education on the competencies, skills, and mindset of the 21st century worker. In the report's Introduction, U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, notes:

"In the global economy, creativity is essential. Today's workers need more than just skills and knowledge to be productive and innovative participants in the workforce. Just look at the inventors of the iPhone

and the developers of Google: they are innovative as well as intelligent. Through their combination of knowledge and creativity, they have transformed the way we communicate, socialize, and do business. Creative experiences are part of the daily work life of engineers, business managers, and hundreds of other professionals. The best way to foster that creativity is through arts education.”¹

In the report’s summary, the authors further state that “an arts education provides a critical benefit to the private sector. In order to effectively compete in the global economy, business leaders are increasingly looking for employees who are creative, collaborative and innovative thinkers. A greater investment in the arts is an effective way to equip today’s students with the skills they will need to succeed in the jobs of tomorrow.”²

Major initiatives in higher education point to art and design thinking as critical to the direction of global innovation and development. These initiatives demonstrate how arts education prepares students for a wide range of fields, and how art and design is increasingly embedded in all industries, rather than being a stand-alone discipline. For example, the **Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)** is leading the STEM to STEAM initiative to add Art and Design to the national agenda of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) education and research in America. The goal is to foster the true innovation that comes with combining the mind of a scientist or technologist with that of an artist or designer. RISD offers examples of how art and design education teaches the flexible thinking, risk-taking and creative problem solving needed to solve today’s most complex and pressing challenges – from healthcare to urban revitalization to global warming.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) recently built the Center for Art, Science and Technology (CAST) with a renewed commitment to an integrated curriculum. As MIT Provost Rafael Reif noted in her remarks at the center’s opening last spring:

“The arts today are embedded in new media and innovative technologies. Many of our students have an exceptional blend of creativity and technical proficiencies and are poised to lead the creative industries of the future, or will lead other fields with the flexible and innovative thinking learned from deep engagement with the arts.”³

¹ President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, *Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America’s Future Through Creative Schools*, <http://www.pcah.gov/publications>, Washington, DC (May 2011)

² *Ibid*

³ MIT establishes Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST), <http://goo.gl/JYTPF> (April 12, 2012)

Finally, increasingly in the digital age, students need to be adept at understanding the media-rich world around them, the nature of the visual arts as a language, and know how to both interpret and apply the aesthetic understanding and formal control essential to effective design and visual communication.

The committee's recommendations are made in the context of the changing needs of today's world. While embracing these shifts in arts education, the Westwood Public Schools also remains committed to delivering an educational program that nurtures self-expression and self-exploration and provides opportunities to experience the ways that art can enrich one's experience in the world.

Mission Statement

The Westwood Art Department provides an environment in which students develop the skills and capacity to create, respond and communicate through the unique language of the visual arts. In an increasingly interconnected and visual world, through their study of the arts, our students enrich their personal experience and become more imaginative thinkers and inventive problem-solvers.

Create

- Engage in the creative problem-solving process
- Experiment and take risks
- Develop craft and technique with increasing proficiency
- Express something original as an individual or as a collaborator

Respond

- Observe and analyze with a critical eye
- Critique one's own work and the work of others
- Recognize and appreciate diverse approaches to art - historical, cultural, and stylistic

Communicate

- Convey ideas and feelings through the elements and principles of art
- Discuss or articulate one's intention and choices as an artist
- Share one's artwork with the community

We invite all of our community members - both within the school and in the larger community - to experience the richness of the arts as active, engaged viewers.

Program Overview

K-12 Visual Art

In keeping with our mission to provide a quality K-12 art program that educates our students to communicate effectively through the visual arts and become creative problem-solvers, our primary goal is to facilitate and ensure the delivery of a strong and relevant curriculum to every child in our district.

With increased need for creativity in the workplace, the habits and attitudes taught in an art class are becoming more and more essential for preparing our students for success in the workplace and in life in general.

Staffing

In 2011-2012, the Art Department was comprised of ten faculty members (9.2 FTE's): 4 FTE's teaching in five elementary schools, 1.2 FTE's at the Middle School, 3.6 FTE's at the High School, plus the Director of Art (0.4 FTE). In 2012-2013, we will increase our staffing to 2.0 FTE's at the Middle School, bringing our total staff to 10 FTE's.

We have a talented and collegial art faculty that is dedicated to working together to keep abreast of best practices to promote learning. All of our art teachers are practicing artists themselves, which adds depth and passion to their commitment to educate our students in the visual arts.

Community Connections

The art faculty is active in promoting the arts in our community. Elementary art teachers, assisted by parent volunteers, conduct annual **Art Night** exhibitions at their respective schools for students and families in the spring. The **Art Matters** program in some of our schools brings art history and art appreciation directly into the elementary classroom through trained parent volunteers three times each year. **Youth Art Month** is celebrated in March with elementary art exhibits in our public libraries and with the annual **Encounters with the Arts** celebration at the high school, which presents exhibits, studio demonstrations and performing arts recitals to the community. Teachers rotate displays of student artwork in their home schools, in Vello's restaurant and in the district Central Office.

Westwood Middle School and High School students have won numerous accolades, from Gold and Silver Keys at the **Boston Scholastic Art Exhibition**, to acceptance into **Art All-State** for some high school juniors.

The **Capturing Nature in Westwood** art exhibit at the High School in the fall is a popular K-12 and community event. In collaboration with the Westwood Land Trust, this evening celebration highlights nature-inspired artwork by K-12

students, art faculty and community artists.

Other community connections include ***Art in Bloom***, a collaboration between high school ceramics classes and the High Rock Garden Club at the Westwood Public Library and ***Project Empty Bowls***, a fundraiser sponsored by the Art and Music Departments at *Encounters with the Arts* to raise money to feed the homeless.

The Westwood art faculty actively seeks to extend and enrich our art program with the help of funding from the Westwood Educational Foundation and our PTO's. Recent ***WEF awards*** include: A Printmaking Press and Visiting Printmaking Artist at the High School; a Visiting Artist in Computer Animation at the Middle School; Art & Science: Observational Drawing in Nature for Grades 3 & 4, in collaboration with Hale Reservation; Commemorative Clay Creations for Grade 5, in collaboration with a Visiting Ceramics Artist. Generous grants from the various PTO's have enabled us to purchase exhibition panels for several schools, as well as frames, easels, lights, mural supplies and ceramics equipment for the high school.

The Elementary Program

Staffing/Schedule

Art is taught to 1,487 elementary students at five schools by four full time elementary art specialists.

Art is offered once per week at the elementary level for 45 minutes (30 minutes in Kindergarten). In addition, the third grade has an additional 45-minute class each week, and the second grade has an additional 45-minute class each week for half of the year. This provides time for additional depth and enrichment in art history and appreciation in Grades 2 and 3.

Overview

The elementary art curriculum is part of a comprehensive K-12 Visual Art curriculum that complements the MA Curriculum Framework for the Visual Arts. Elements and principles of art are taught in a sequential and spiraling curriculum, with progressive intensification and complexity added in successive years. Additional key areas of focus include Processes and Skills; Observation, Illusion, Invention, and Abstraction; and Art History, Appreciation and Connections. Throughout the curriculum, students are taught how to talk and write about art and how to evaluate what they see. At even the youngest of grades, students are encouraged to make connections to their own world, think critically, solve visual problems, work cooperatively and find value in the arts. The curriculum provides flexibility to the teachers, allowing them the freedom to approach lessons in their own way, using the media and subject matter that they feel are most appropriate.

This keeps the material fresh, timely and relevant.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Elementary art teachers have developed a Grade 5 “Art of the Americas” unit that is implemented during the year. They are working specifically with 5th grade teams across the system to make as many connections as possible to the social studies curriculum. In 2012, Martha Jones & Deerfield visited the Art of the Americas wing at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, where they had the opportunity to reinforce what they had learned in Art and Social Studies. The goal is to have all of the 5th Grade elementary students visit the Art of the Americas Wing at the MFA by 2013.

Whenever possible, elementary art teachers try to make connections to the K-5 Math Curriculum. MCAS results across the district indicate that students can still use work on understanding symmetry, (particularly lines of symmetry), 2D vs. 3D shapes as well as measurement (reading a ruler). The goal is to reinforce these skills through the visual arts curriculum. Connections to the MA Literacy Standards are made in art through the use of written reflections, visual storytelling, art history and art criticism.

Assessment practices focus on portfolios that chronicle student work over a period of time as well as self-evaluation using clear rubrics and reflective writing.

Middle School

Staffing/Schedule

The staffing and schedule for art at the Middle School will change dramatically beginning in September 2012.

Since the last curriculum review, due to budget constraints, art was offered to students in only two middle school grades, most recently to grades seven and eight. Instruction was provided by 1.2 FTE art specialists to 487 students in grades seven and eight. Classes were 42 minutes long and met every day for one quarter of the year (for a total of 44 classes). Art was not offered to students in grade six.

The FY’13 budget provides additional staffing (.4 FTE), enabling the restoration of an art program for students in grades six, seven, and eight beginning in September, 2012. In addition, with the restructuring of the middle school schedule to a trimester format, instructional time in art will increase from 44 classes per year to 60 classes per year. This increase in instructional time and continuity from grade 5 to grade 6 will allow teachers to strengthen the curricular link from elementary to high school.

Overview

Art at the Middle School expands on the skills, knowledge and habits of mind nurtured at the elementary level and prepares students for the art program at the high school. The middle school curriculum is designed to enable students to extend their visual vocabulary, think critically, and understand that art is a tool of communication and expression. Through a series of hands-on experiences using a wide array of materials and techniques, students learn how to use the elements and principles of design to translate thoughts and feelings into two- and three-dimensional works of art. Students solve design problems that encourage the development of unique and personal solutions. Through class discussion and written assignments, students learn how to analyze and evaluate their own work and that of others. Proper use, care and maintenance of art materials is emphasized.

Students are introduced to the work of various artists and cultures to expand their appreciation of the role of the arts in different societies. Connections to the classroom curriculum are often made. In grade seven, students connect with science when drawing the skeleton, plants and animals. Connections with social studies are made when students explore sculpture techniques creating medieval gargoyles and stained glass mosaics.

High School

Staffing/Schedule

The High School Art Department is comprised of three full time teachers who each teach five classes and the Director of Art, who teaches 3 classes. Each year, 40-45% of the student body enrolls in the 18 art sections offered by the Art Department. The average class size is 22, with class sizes ranging between 14 – 26 students. Most art classes are open to students in grades 9 through 12. Classes are offered at level 2, with an honors (level 1) option available to students who wish to deepen and extend their studies.

All art classes meet 7 days per 8-day cycle for 47 minutes for the full year.

Overview

High School art classes emphasize communication, critical thinking, problem solving and creativity through the unique language of the visual arts. All art classes are full year courses and receive credit commensurate with traditional academic classes. Classes currently offered are Studio Art I, II, III, IV, and AP Studio Art; Graphic Design I and II; Digital Photography; Ceramics I, II, III, IV; and Three-Dimensional Design. We are gradually beginning to offer AP portfolio in 2D Design and 3D Design to qualified students. Three additional courses are listed in our Program of Studies: AP Art History, Art and Artifact, and The Modern Muse and are run only some years, depending on student interest and available

staffing.

One full-year course in the Visual or Performing Arts is a requirement for graduation.

In addition to teaching elements and principles, composition and handling of materials, all art courses focus on brainstorming and ideation. We strongly encourage students to be active learners and to strive for original solutions to artistic challenges. Teachers utilize Ning sites to facilitate electronic communication and to enable students to assemble visual portfolios consisting of art exemplars and their own creative artwork. Traditional and contemporary artists are introduced to expand students' appreciation of the variety and diversity of artistic expression throughout time. Discussion and practice of the Eight Studio Habits of Mind foster the discipline and focus required to be an artist.

Individual and group critiques enable students to discuss and analyze artworks with a critical eye. Student progress is captured through reflective written and oral activities, and by means of formative and summative assessments. Reflective Practice and Professional Development meetings provide opportunities for the art faculty to review student progress and revise teaching practices if necessary.

Visual Arts Strengths and Recommendations

Through the curriculum review process the committee identified program strengths and articulated recommendations to guide the department's work in several areas:

- A. Program Opportunities and Participation
- B. Curriculum and Instruction
- C. Assessment
- D. Instructional Technology
- E. Professional Development

These findings are outlined below.

Program Opportunities and Participation

To what extent does the program provide Westwood students with the opportunity for proficiency development? To what extent has the art program been supported by the school community?

Strengths:

- The breadth of course offerings students may elect at the high school
- Opportunities for in-depth study in the arts, through the Advanced Placement level
- A cross-section of students (variety of backgrounds, interest, and levels) access the art curriculum and produce high-quality work
- Art is a visible (both physically and digitally) and appreciated part of the culture of the school and community
- Partnerships with community groups expand visual arts in the community (e.g. Vello's, public library, Youth Art Month displays, Westwood Day logo, etc.)
- Encounters with the Arts, Capturing Nature in Westwood, and the elementary spring art shows provide robust opportunities for displaying and celebrating students' work in the community

Recommendations:

- Increase the number of students who continue their art education and develop their skills through the Advanced Placement level.
- Expand AP Studio Art to include Digital Photography, Graphic Design & 3D Design, perhaps through a hybrid course model.
- Continue to explore models for facilitating longer blocks for studio work at the high school (e.g. "in-house field trip," other scheduling models).
- Coordinate and align the "Art Matters" docent program with the existing curriculum.
- Explore why the number of boys participating in the art program decreases across grades 9-12.
- Restore AP Art History at the high school.

- Continue to provide opportunities for “open studio” time both after school and during school day.

Curriculum and Instruction

To what extent is an organized, up-to-date curriculum in place? To what extent are researched-based instructional practices being implemented?

Strengths:

- Teachers’ instruction emphasizes the art making process, including generating multiple ideas and varied solutions to a problem.
- Instructional strategies emphasize thinking about, writing about, commenting on, and critiquing both one’s own work and the work of others.
- The curriculum emphasizes the development of academic vocabulary.
- The curricular experiences are student-centered and related to students’ natural curiosities and developmental needs.
- The curriculum provides students many opportunities to explore and discover through a variety of media.
- An increased focus on the creative-problem solving process, critical-thinking, and skill development has resulted in high-quality student work, as exemplified by the increasing number of students recognized in the Boston Globe Scholastic Art competition and Art All-State.
- The climate of art classrooms is focused and purposeful.

Recommendations:

- Complete the development of a K-12 dynamic curriculum map around power standards and engaging essential questions to ensure vertical and horizontal alignment by the end of the 2012-2013 school year.
- Identify essential common/benchmark experiences for transitions from grades 5 to 6 and grades 8 to 9.
- Review and revise projects and instructional strategies to promote creative problem-solving and original expression.
- Provide more opportunities for original extension of explicit concepts.

- Establish common expectations about when students will be exposed to core artists and artistic movements.
- Identify opportunities for cross-curricular connections (K-8).
- Include more observational drawing across all grade levels.
- Provide more experiences for working in 3D.
- Increase opportunities for collaborative projects.
- Explicitly teach skills necessary to document, archive, and display work.

Assessment

To what extent are assessments that reflect student learning goals in place, being implemented, and being used to inform instruction and improve student achievement?

Strengths:

- 93% of high school students report that their teachers “provide feedback that helps me improve.”
- Responses in the student survey indicate that students are reflective and articulate about how and why their work has developed over time.
- Elementary students practice a variety of methods for self-assessing and critiquing artwork.
- At the secondary level, frequent written and oral critiques enable students to demonstrate an ability to analyze works of art (their own and that of others) using appropriate academic vocabulary.
- Teachers collaboratively examine student work in order to inform instruction.
- Elementary teachers have developed and implemented common assessments in kindergarten and grade 3.
- High school teachers have established common midyear and final assessments.

Recommendations:

- Expand the use of common formative and summative assessments in lessons (K-12).
- Establish benchmark experiences and competencies for students completing Grades 5 and 8 as they transition to the middle school and the high school.
- Develop strategies for assessing students’ ability to recognize “the qualities of quality,” as well as self-critique and make decisions about how to improve their work.
- Develop a digital student portfolio system to chronicle, process and archive student work.

Instructional Technology

In what ways is instructional technology being used to facilitate powerful teaching and learning?

Strengths:

- Students have many opportunities to use technology creatively, particularly in the context of graphic design and digital photography.
- Technology is used instructionally at all levels (e.g. projecting images, presenting artists and techniques, conducting research)
- Technology is used to exhibit student work (e.g. Google sites, Ning) and to create student portfolios.
- Increasingly, particularly at the high school level, teachers are using technology to create online interactive learning environments where students critique works of art.

Recommendations:

- Expand the use of technology for teachers to assess student work, with a focus on assessing students' growth over time.
- Expand the use of technology for students to self-assess their work and comment on their process (e.g. through Google apps, mp3 files, Ning, etc.)
- Ensure that middle school students learn how to use technology to efficiently and independently document their work and create digital portfolios.
- Assess the technology equipment needs of the art rooms across the district.
- Consider opportunities for providing virtual museum visits, virtual conversations with artists, etc. to create a dynamic art room culture.

Professional Development

To what extent is there a focus on improving the skills and capacity of teachers to implement the curriculum? To what extent does the professional culture promote collaboration to support student learning and achievement?

Strengths:

- Faculty collaborate through Professional Learning Communities, Reflective Practice, grade and subject level meetings, peer coaching, mentoring etc. to discuss best practices and improve teaching and learning.
- Teachers use professional development time to collaboratively examine student work in order to inform curriculum and instruction.
- Teachers have numerous opportunities to participate in conferences and workshops outside of the district.

Recommendations:

- Provide professional development around a common method for digitally documenting, storing, and assessing student artwork.
- Provide opportunities for art teachers to develop their curriculum-writing skills.
- Increase opportunities for collaboratively examining student work - particularly as it relates to encouraging unique solutions - and identifying instructional implications.

APPENDIX A

Themes from the student survey:

Areas of Strength

Students recognized the skills, ideas, and habits that teachers are emphasizing

Students feel that teachers have confidence in students' ability to make good art

Students are very aware of the ways that they are improving

Students appreciate the wide variety of course offerings ("something for everyone")

Students believe teachers are knowledgeable, passionate, and care about what they are teaching

Students report a high level of confidence in their art making

Students report that their work is displayed in school and that they enjoy seeing other students' work.

Encounters with the Arts is a very positive experience for students.

A high percentage of students visit art museums outside of school

A lot of student work is displayed in students' homes

Areas of Need

Students report that their middle school art classes don't fully prepare them for high school art classes.

Students would like more instruction in drawing from observation

Students in upper level courses would like longer class blocks

Students would like more physical space in studios

Proportion of boys in art classes drops off at older grades

Resources

- Massachusetts Art Curriculum Framework, November 1999
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/arts/1099.pdf>
- MIT Center for Art, Science and Technology (CAST)
<http://goo.gl/JYTPF>
- National Standards for Visual Art, 1994
<http://goo.gl/WRT69>
- Partnership on 21st Century Skills (P21) “4Cs:” Critical thinking and problem-solving, Creativity and innovation, Collaboration, and Communication
<http://www.p21.org/>
- *President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America’s Future Through Creative Schools*,
<http://www.pcah.gov/publications>, Washington, DC (May 2011)
- RISD STEM to STEAM initiative
<http://stemtoteam.org/>
- Seidel, S., Tishman, S., Winner, E., Hetland, L, and Palmer, P. *The Qualities of Quality: Understanding Excellence in Art Education*, Project Zero, Harvard University, <http://goo.gl/19cSI> (June 2009)