

NMACAE Position Statement on Arts Assessment

The New Mexico Advisory Council for Arts Education (NMACAE) fully supports authentic and reliable statewide arts assessment of student learning in each of these content areas separately: Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theater and Visual Arts.

While benefits have come from the current EOC system, we feel that the January 2018 adoption of the National Core Arts Standards for New Mexico (NMCAS) demands a greater degree of authenticity in statewide assessment for student learning in the arts. We recommend changes commensurate with this advance in educational policy:

- Build upon existing successes in authentic portfolio and performance statewide assessment,
- Align with full NMCAS, Creating, Presenting, Responding, and Connecting. Students will create and perform as an essential component arts assessments.
- Increase funding for arts assessment,
- Acknowledge the impact of assessment policy on instruction, and
- Empower teachers with assessment data.

NMACAE recommends that New Mexico public schools strive for authentic assessment of student learning in the performing and visual arts through arts-educator-adjudicated performance and portfolio assessment of student work resulting in reliable student scores and offering opportunities for valid interpretations of results. Our recommendation is based on evaluation of numerous peer-reviewed publications of research on performance and portfolio assessment. Decades of precedent exist for successful implementation of large-scale, authentic portfolio and performance assessment (Dorn, Madeja, & Sabol, 2004; Schuler, Stecher, 2010; Brophy, & Sabol, 2016). A preeminent example is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) which has employed arts performance assessment since 1972 (Stecher, 2010).

- Build upon existing successes. NMACAE recommends that New Mexico Public Education Department expand the scope of possibilities for New Mexico arts assessments in order to **build upon other states' and organizations' successful implementation of performance/portfolio assessments** based primarily on performance tasks.

“A performance task is a structured situation in which stimulus materials and a request for information or action are presented to an individual, who generates a response that can be rated for quality using explicit standards. The standards may apply to the final product or to the process of creating it. A performance assessment is a collection of performance tasks.” (Stecher, 2010, p. 3)

- Align with full NMCAS. NMACAE recommends that assessments **align with the eleven anchor standards in the context of four artistic processes of Creating, Presenting, Responding, and Connecting**, and as such include:

Primarily authentic, discipline-specific performance tasks demanding demonstration of not only declarative and procedural knowledge but also

“schematic knowledge (knowing why) [and] strategic knowledge (knowing when, where, and how our knowledge applies)” (Stecher, 2010, p. 2).

Evaluative rubrics made up of criteria and performance descriptors crafted with a high degree of *construct validity*, based on NMCAS learning outcomes. Consult with qualified personnel as part of a Technical Assistance Committee to improve test items and rubrics.

Criteria applicable to a wide range of technical approaches, not specific to a particular medium. This principle is exemplified by the NMCAS Model Cornerstones Assessments (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014).

Sufficient numbers of criterion-referenced items to achieve acceptable reliability of an overall student score on a performance/portfolio assessment. (Stecher, 2010) Consult with qualified personnel as part of a Technical Assistance Committee to improve test items and rubrics.

Evaluation of both written reflection and expressive student work. Evidence of expressive work in the arts may be digitized. Written reflections may include artist statements or self-assessment checklists, as exemplified by the NCAS Model Cornerstones Assessments (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014).

Minimization of multiple-choice questions as a tool for assessing student learning.

Arts educators as evaluators trained to maintain a high degree of interrater reliability assessing evidence of learning in anonymous student work.

“. . . in most cases it is possible to train qualified raters to score well-constructed, standardized performance tasks with acceptable levels of consistency using thoughtful rating criteria.” (Stecher, 2010, p. 20)

- Increase funding for arts assessment. NMACAE acknowledges that higher expectations for a NMCAS-aligned “test worth teaching to” (Stecher, 2010, p. 12) demand an **increase in monetary investment in arts assessment**, and NMACAE supports increasing funding for better outcomes in the arts education of New Mexico public schools.
- Acknowledge the impact of assessment policy on instruction. NMACAE recognizes that arts teachers tend to change their classroom practices in response to accountability reforms. **Adapting assessment of student learning outcomes to NMCAS will have a positive impact on arts instruction** provided to New Mexico’s public school students. Whereas the assessment of declarative and procedural knowledge in the arts using only multiple-choice and constructed response questions has the indirect effect of limiting the curriculum provided to students (Stecher, 2010), adopting NCAS standards signifies public demand in New Mexico for authentic learning in the arts disciplines, including broader, artistic ways of knowing (discipline-specific schematic knowledge, strategic knowledge, and a dispositional view of knowledge).
- Empower teachers with individual assessment data. We support distinct core arts assessment in each content area. NMACAE recommends that **standards-aligned reports of individual student assessment** data be provided to teachers so that teachers may use the data for

informed curriculum planning, remediation, and acceleration. Reports of these data may also indicate individual learning over time and in comparison with other students statewide.

References:

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Committee Members:

Neil Swapp
neilswapp@nmmea.com

Steve Heil
sheil@sfps.k12.nm.us

Leanne Devane
ldevane@sfps.k12.nm.us

Vicki Breen
vicki.breen@state.nm.us