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# Effective 9-12 Arts Instruction: Visual Arts Assessment Strategies

*Kyle A. Guzik*

Instructional leaders must make decisions to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The purpose of this alignment is to allow each educational component to work with the others, with the goal of helping students to achieve intended learning outcomes. The visual arts are an important but sometimes overlooked subject. Students who study the visual arts can learn to view the world in a unique way that is separate from perspectives emphasized in other subjects. This paper will consider multiple assessment strategies that have been applied in high school art education. These assessment strategies comprise the assessed curriculum and indirectly influence the taught curriculum.

This paper will focus on the needs of high school students who wish to pursue careers related to the visual arts. These are students who intend to go to college to study the visual arts or related fields, such as art education or graphic design. They may also intend to complete graduate degrees in fine arts, art history, education, or other related fields. For this subset of the student population, the goal of their high school education should be to set them on a

path to become self-supporting practicing artists. While students may dream of exiting high school and immediately being discovered as artists, in reality, becoming an artist who makes a living through creative work typically takes years of effort and advanced specialized education. This paper will review a number of visual arts assessment strategies to which these students may be exposed. These assessment strategies differ markedly in their appropriateness in meeting the needs of future visual artists.

## **Defining Visual Arts Assessment**

There are a variety of visual arts assessment strategies implemented at the school level in the present day. Large-scale assessments include the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Arts Assessment, the International Baccalaureate (IB) Arts Portfolio Assessment, the Advanced Placement (AP) Studio Art Portfolios, and the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT). While these include national and international tests, instructional leaders at the school level have some input in deciding if their school will participate in many of these assessments and how they will support teachers to prepare students for these tests.

Administrators should be aware of effective assessment strategies used at the classroom level so that they can support visual arts teachers. This support is an important responsibility for instructional leaders. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) has established a set of standards for educational leadership. According to functions described in ISLLC Standard 2, instructional leaders must create assessment and accountability systems, monitor student progress, and use data from these systems to evaluate the impact of educational programs (National Policy Board for Education Administration [NPBEA], 2008, p. 14).

An important form of assessment in the visual arts is the use of the portfolio. Portfolios are collections of student work, typically including artwork students have produced independently as well as teacher-directed assignments. Portfolios can also be produced in digital form. The digital portfolio is of particular interest because its use of technology has the potential to expand student opportunities for self-reflection, as well as provide efficient documentation of student progress toward intended learning outcomes.

This report also considers theories related to visual arts assessment that are relevant for an educational leader who wishes to understand how intended learning outcomes can influence assessment strategies. Willis (2014) considered the interrelationships that develop between students and teachers at the classroom level and how awareness of this context should influence assessment practices. Davis-Soylu, Pepler, and Hickey (2011)

proposed an assessment staging theory that grounds their strategy of assessment assemblage. Assessment staging theory questions whether there is a division between formative and summative assessments. Formative assessments are traditionally understood as formal and informal evaluations of student progress conducted throughout instruction for the purpose of making informed decisions when modifying teaching strategies to increase student progress. The conventional description of summative assessment includes high-stakes evaluation of student learning against a standard. Assessment staging theory obviates the distinction between these two forms of assessment by proposing that all assessments have both formative and summative functions. Wilson (1996) proposed a holistic visual arts assessment strategy that is grounded in discipline-based arts education.

Visual arts assessment serves the important need of evaluating student achievement. Teachers use formative assessments to determine student progress and modify their instruction based upon data gained from formative assessment. Summative assessments allow teachers to assign grades and are the basis from which educators can determine the degree to which the taught curriculum has become the learned curriculum. Assessments allow administrators to make generalizations about the progress of a class or the entire school towards educational goals. Assessments are used to hold teachers and schools responsible for the achievement of their students. Another important use of arts assessment is the student-directed creation of a portfolio for admission to university-level arts

schools. Because of the important function of assessments it is critical that educational leaders understand the best practices regarding assessment strategies.

### Research Review

#### Large-scale Assessment

Multiple large-scale assessments have been used to evaluate the visual arts in the United States. The NAEP conducted visual arts assessments in 1975, 1978, 1997, and 2008; NAEP will conduct an assessment of the arts proficiency of eighth-graders that will include visual arts in 2016 (Stites & Malin, 2008; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012). The 2008 NAEP Arts Assessment evaluated a representative sample of approximately 3,900 eighth-graders attending about 260 different public and private schools (NCES, 2012). The 1997 and 2008 NAEP Arts Assessments included multiple choice questions, open-ended writing questions, and performance tasks (Stites & Malin, 2008). Student drawings were photographed under controlled conditions and evaluated at a central location by trained judges (Stites & Malin, 2008). The 1997 NAEP Arts Assessment was developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and was praised for incorporating new psychometric techniques and achieving many important goals, including “building a performance assessment based on arts content standards; using complex, applied performance-based tasks to recognize and measure creative achievement in the arts; and adhering to strict administration guidelines and scoring criteria” (Stites & Malin, 2008, pp. 8-9). However, the assessment was criticized for including too small of a sample size and for using methods that

would be difficult to implement for all students on a statewide basis (Stites & Malin, 2008).

The International Baccalaureate (IB) program is in use in over 60 countries, including the United States (Stites & Malin, 2008). IB assessments are highly regarded and are accepted at universities throughout the world (Stites & Malin, 2008). Visual arts students at the Diploma Programme level (ages 16-19) complete a studio and research portfolio which is used to evaluate student achievement and to graduate the students (Stites & Malin, 2008). Students put their best finished work in their portfolios and also include works in progress that document their research as well as sketches and a research notebook with critical self-reflections (Stites & Malin, 2008). An IB examiner visits the student’s school and evaluates his or her portfolio for “imaginative expression, purposeful exploration, meaning and function, formal qualities, and technical and media skill”; the examiner also conducts an interview with the student (Stites & Malin, 2008, p. 22). Photos of the student’s artwork and copies of other portfolio materials are sent to Cardiff, Wales, where trained moderators compare the work to samples identified as benchmarks for given achievement levels (Stites & Malin, 2008). Stites and Malin (2008) identified the processes of benchmarking and moderation as strengths of the IB assessment model. In addition, evaluation of portfolios and research notebooks is a more authentic and appropriate assessment method than paper and pencil tests (Stites & Malin, 2008). However, this assessment method is costly, requiring a trained examiner to visit each school and additional

examiners to examine each student's work at a central location (Stites & Malin, 2008). In addition, only senior level students are evaluated; larger scale implementation of this assessment method for accountability purposes would be complex and costly (Stites & Malin, 2008).

Since 1972, the College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) Studio Art portfolio assessments have been used to demonstrate that students have met college-level standards of achievement in the visual arts (Stites & Malin, 2008). There are three portfolio programs: drawing, 2-D design, and 3-D design (Stites & Malin, 2008). Students submit slides of work that demonstrate the quality of their work, their investigation in an area of concentration, and the breadth of their work; students also submit writing samples (Stites & Malin, 2008). The AP exam requires students to meet more specific criteria than the IB exam; students are evaluated on a written numerical scale (Stites & Malin, 2008). AP raters of the artwork and readers of the written statements have experience as college art faculty or three or more years of experience as studio art teachers (Stites & Malin, 2008). The benefits of the AP assessment process are similar to that of the IB program. The assessment process itself is part of the learning experience, and the products are authentic to the field of visual arts (Stites & Malin, 2008). However the strict portfolio criteria may lead teachers to emphasize certain aspects of the visual arts curriculum over others. In addition, like the IB program, the individualized evaluation process would be expensive to implement on a statewide or nationwide scale; in order for the evaluation to be

fair all students assessed would need equal access to the materials needed to produce the portfolio products (Stites & Malin, 2008).

In 2008, Kentucky was the only state with a statewide mandated assessment in the arts. The Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT) includes the arts as one of the content areas; however, only a small proportion of the test is devoted to the arts (5% at the 5th grade level, 6.75% at the 8th grade level, and 7% at the 11th grade level) (Stites & Malin, 2008). The KCCT is a traditional paper and pencil test and "the arts portion of the KCCT consists of eight multiple-choice questions and two open-response items, which can be in any of the four art disciplines (music, visual art, theater, and dance)" (p. 16). Teachers may choose to spend less time on art because the arts constitute only a small portion of the test. The test is more cost-effective but features a form of assessment that is the least authentic to the field of visual arts of the assessments described above.

Although impetus for standardized assessment in the visual arts appears to be waning at the present moment, the general educational climate in which teachers face enormous pressure to prepare students to succeed at multiple-choice tests has had an impact on art education. Boughton (2005) reported, "some art teachers are required to write commitment statements for school administrators explaining what measures they will implement to improve students' skills so that they are more likely to pass multiple-choice tests in language, arts, and mathematics" (p. 216). Boughton criticized "institutionalized assessment practices" that promote

homogeneity, assess inappropriate content, and trivialize the subject matter (p. 216). In fact, Boughton claimed, “when we think about assessing the arts the words ‘standardized’ and ‘art’ should never be used in the same sentence” (p. 216). Simple content knowledge and media skills are easy to test for the purpose of satisfying accountability requirements, but this sort of assessment encourages a pedagogy that abrogates the main purposes of engagement in the arts (Boughton, 2005). Boughton argued that students must be able to engage in autonomous individual concept development, use their imaginations, and develop a critical stance; these are intended learning outcomes that must be promoted through the use of assessment methods appropriate to art education. Art becomes a means for exploring individuality and this premise is antithetical to standardization.

### **Portfolios**

The use of a portfolio for assessment is one way to align assessment with Boughton’s (2005) intended learning outcome. A portfolio is a collection of work accumulated over time (Boughton, 2005). The content of a portfolio is embedded in daily classroom instruction. However the portfolio development process should be open-ended in that students are encouraged to develop their classroom experiences into independent investigations of ideas (Boughton, 2005). This means that a portfolio should not consist of a collection of teacher-defined ‘on-demand’ tasks but instead should showcase the individual explorations of the student (Boughton, 2005). Student portfolios that are only a collection of assigned work will generally all look the same, and it will not demonstrate that

students have the capacity to take responsibility and develop the ability to work independently; these types of portfolios only demonstrate the ability of the teacher to invent tasks and direct student responses (Boughton, 2005). Good portfolios will be unique to the student, demonstrating the student’s visual cultural interests and individuality; they may contain a wide range of media and will include work the student has created outside of class (Boughton, 2005). Good portfolios should contain student-selected entries (Stecher & Herman, 1997; Castiglione, 1996). Most importantly, good portfolios should promote students’ critical self-reflection, which can be documented in written or recorded form (Wolf, 1988).

Portfolio assessment has limitations. According to Castiglione (1996), there are no large-scale investigations of predictive validity based on portfolio assessment in the arts. There have been few attempts to use a formalized grading system in judging portfolios (Madeja, 2004). Interrater reliability is a threat to validity in portfolio assessment. Portfolio assessors must be trained to achieve consistency, fairness, and accuracy, and this requires time, effort, financial commitment, and explicit standards (Castiglione, 1996). Art teachers may be influenced by role conflict when assessing their own students’ work; they may be influenced by their desire to help students and consequently apply standards unfairly to pass students with unsatisfactory work (Castiglione, 1996). In addition, “portfolio reviews are less reliable. . . and more likely to misclassify students than are other means of measuring academic standing” (Castiglione, 1996, p. 7). This

was contradicted by Madeja (2004) who found that “art teacher judgments of student artworks were reliable at the .01 level, which indicates 99 percent or better agreement as to the quality of artworks” (p. 8). One way to address reliability concerns is through the use of well-trained, independent monitors (Castiglione, 1996). Generalizability is also a concern: Shavelston, Baxter, and Gao (1993) estimated that between 10 and 23 separate portfolio products (tasks)—all of which must be laboriously hand scored—would be needed to attain an acceptable level of generalizability.

The utility of portfolios can be greatly enhanced when digital content is integrated as another medium (Boughton, 2005; Popovich, 2006). A digital portfolio can be defined as “any portfolio recorded in digital media and assembled in any format as an alternative to a collection of actual artworks” (Fitzsimmons, 2008, p. 48). Digital portfolios can increase student motivation to document their work, as well as student motivation to record reflective comments, and have the added benefit of allowing students to better review their individual progress (Boughton, 2005). In addition, “examination of information in alternative formats provides the brain with a new set of information from which new meaning must be resolved” (Fitzsimmons, 2008, p. 8). Digital portfolios provide students with the opportunity to review and evaluate their work in a new context. They also make it possible for a large amount of student work to be documented over time without taking up limited classroom space.

## **Crystalline Reflection and Student Dialogue**

It may seem from the above discussion of large-scale assessment and portfolios that the tension in visual arts assessment is between traditional standardized paper-and-pencil testing and the more authentic use of performance based assessment. However, the problem is more nuanced. Willis (2014), through the use of a simile, proposed that visual arts assessment be considered within interrelated contexts specific to artistic concepts. He wrote, “imagine people as crystals, constantly reflecting and refracting each moment and movement of the environment” (p. 149). Willis compared reflection in a crystal, where light interacts both inside the crystal and with the surrounding environment, to the cognitive process of reflection, which includes self-reflection conducted internally by the student, as well as reflections generated by the instructor and other members of the community while evaluating the student’s work. Willis described an intended learning outcome of art education: the student should acquire “visual social-cultural-historical literacy” (p.150). Assessment then, should support this learning outcome by providing a “sophisticated critical, analytical dialogue” that is developed for the purpose of discussing “individual and communal experiences” (Willis, 2014, p. 150). Willis described individual experiences as facets in a crystal, with each classroom containing multiple crystals; therefore, the potential for reflection grows exponentially with respect to the number of relationships possible within a classroom. This makes the assessment process complex and problematic.

The socio-cultural environment in which art instruction is conducted is subject to change. This has the effect of creating a “labyrinth of reflection” where assessment may begin with a “critical/academic approach,” but order, or the identification of points of conceptual convergence from all of the disparate reflections possible in a classroom, can be created through the alignment of assessment practices with “social/environmental” considerations (Willis, 2014, p. 151). For Willis, effective visual arts assessment is the creation of a dialogue. Initial judgments created in this dialogue may be considered formative assessments. Summative assessments must be temporary and tentative because “the socio-cultural-personal sphere of perception is evolving” (p. 151).

Willis’ (2014) critique of assessment may seem too abstract to implement in a high school art class; however his conception of what is relevant in effective visual arts assessment can have direct influence on student learning and development. If students are to understand art, they must be able to engage in meaningful dialogue about their experiences with art making and their interpretations of the art work of others. Establishment of this dialogue, the ability to talk about art and make connections between artistic concepts, can be accomplished by aligning instructional practices (development of student visual arts dialogue) with assessment practices (evaluation of student dialogue). This form of assessment may address student conceptual development in a way that performance based assessment does not. Marcel Duchamp insisted that art is an idea first rather than an object. This

proposition has had significant art historical impact regardless of whether or not it is true. Students who cannot engage in conceptual dialogue are deficient in a cognitive ability specific to art appreciation and art making; conceptual dialogue is a skill that is perhaps useful in other fields as well. Development of this ability is a meaningful learning outcome that should be approached in concert with development of technical skill.

### **Holistic Assessment**

While Willis’ (2014) conception of effective visual arts assessment should not be discounted, his proposal lacks specificity on what an effective assessment system should look like. A much more concrete set of assessment practices are found in Wilson’s (1996) strategy for holistic assessment, which is a component of discipline-based arts education. Wilson compares American art education practices to those found in European nations, such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Wilson argued that European arts examination policies are more holistic than those in the United States. According to Boughton (2005), “student admission to universities in European and Australasian countries is based upon the results of state or national public examinations of senior-school subjects (including art), rather than standardized university admission exams” (p. 215). Wilson (1996) argued that these examinations lead to higher quality secondary arts instruction because students are expected to complete their examination projects without teacher assistance and because teams, including the classroom art teacher, art teachers from different schools, and regional

examination specialists, evaluate these projects. Students benefit from objective evaluation of their artwork by professional raters. Teachers face pressure to provide high quality instruction, and students have incentive to work hard, because of the high expectations and high stakes these examinations create (Wilson, 1996).

There are also potential negative effects of this testing regimen. National examinations influence the taught curriculum in Europe; teachers emphasize concepts and artistic practices that will be assessed. In the Netherlands “students take separate examinations—one in the area of critical studies (which includes visual analysis, art criticism, and art history) and one relating to practical work (art making)” (Wilson, 1996, p. 3). Students may receive excellent instruction in art history and technique, but due to the bifurcated nature of the assessments, they may not be taught to make connections between their own art work and that of practicing artists. Students frequently seem to view their own work as individually constructed and fail to perceive the influence of the greater visual culture (Wilson, 1996).

Wilson (1996) argued that holistic approaches have the potential to make American art education superior to that of Europe. Wilson presented a paradigm for discipline-based art education in the form of instruction integrated with assessment through the use of “Comprehensive Holistic Assessment Tasks,” or CHATS (p. 5). The following description of CHATS serves as an example of what effective discipline-based art education is. In CHATS, assessment units are constructed around exemplary great

works of art. Units begin with “first-draft interpretations” where students engage in verbal and written dialogue about the work of art without any background knowledge other than what they already possess (Wilson, 1996, p. 5). In the “first-draft theme-based creation” stage students discuss how the artwork relates to large themes (i.e., “human relationships to society, to natural and built environments, to time and place, to the future, to deity, norms and values, and so on”) and create sketches and models that relate to themes found in the artwork (Wilson, 1996, p. 5). In the “discipline-based study” phase students investigate artworks “within their social, historical, cultural, aesthetic, and artistic contexts” for example by reading biographies and art historical critiques (Wilson, 1996, p. 5). The next phase is “multi-draft and final-draft creation” where students create and refine their own artworks related to the unit. (Wilson, 1996, p. 5). In the “final-draft interpretations” phase students create written interpretations relating the ideas in the studied artwork to their own projects. (Wilson, 1996, p. 5). The culminating task is “comparing the meaning of the artist’s work to the student’s artwork,” where students “interpret the connections—thematic, ideational, stylistic, expressive, and so on—among the artworks they have created and the artist’s work at the center of the unit” (Wilson, 1996, p. 5).

CHATS are most effective when specific assessment practices are built into these assessment units. Because of the complex interrelationship between art teachers and their students who create the art products, it is difficult to separate student achievement from teacher

influence (Wilson, 1996). Discipline-based art education derives significant effectiveness from its use of communal interpretation of artworks (Wilson, 1996). In order for assessment to be aligned with instruction, Wilson explains that students can be evaluated in small groups of perhaps five students. The students are shown a work of art and are provided instructions for a group discussion of the piece. This discussion is not teacher-led; it is between the students. The students then create a written summary of the interpretations generated during their discussion that can best be supported with evidence. Wilson (1996) does not hold with those who believe there are no wrong answers in art interpretation. He wrote, “to claim that artworks mean things they clearly do not mean and to allow unjustified interpretations to stand is like telling lies about artworks. It also diminishes their power to educate” (p. 7). Authenticity itself is an intended learning outcome here; students should be able to find and explain the meaning of a work of art and support their explanations with evidence.

Wilson’s (1994) assessment strategy is holistic in its applications. This set of linked assessment tasks can be used to “collect data relating to virtually all of the national standards for visual arts” (p. 8). This is advantageous because it allows all evidence of student achievement to be collected simultaneously, rather than by designing individual tasks to assess achievement in hundreds of different standards (Wilson, 1994). In this assessment strategy assessment is aligned with instruction because the assessment activities “use the same kinds of performance processes and tasks undertaken during instruction” (p. 8).

### **Assessment Assemblage**

A critique of many of the assessment strategies described above is that they focus on the needs of only a subset of all potential stakeholders in arts education. Davis-Soylu and colleagues (2011) organized the spectrum of potential stakeholders into personal, provincial, and global categories. Personal stakeholders include the teachers and students in a given classroom (Davis-Soylu et al., 2011). Provincial stakeholders include school administrators and state officials (Davis-Soylu et al., 2011). Global stakeholders include government agencies, arts education associations, and art scholars concerned with broad national and international trends in art education (Davis-Soylu et al., 2011).

Portfolio assessment strategies may serve the needs of classroom teachers; however, they have not provided a comprehensive solution to assessing student learning in ways that communicate to those outside the arts (Brewer, 2008; Cho & Forde, 2001; Davis-Soylu et al., 2011; Gruber & Hobbs, 2002). Likewise, while standardized assessment may provide data useful to administrators, “the degree of conformity required for [multiple-choice] formats does not work well with the unique and complex nature of learning in the arts,” particularly as enacted at the classroom level (Davis-Soylu et al., 2011, p. 214). Davis-Soylu and colleagues (2011) proposed a solution: a strategy of assessment assemblage based upon assessment staging theory. Assessment staging theory bypasses the dichotomy between formative and summative assessment by proposing that all assessment tasks have

both formative and summative functions. These functions may be formative for some stakeholders and summative for others (Davis-Soylu et al., 2011). Assessment assemblage incorporates disparate assessment strategies and the needs of multiple stakeholders in a manner analogous to the artistic practice of assemblage, in which individual objects are rearranged to create a harmonious whole piece that is meaningful in new ways due to the interrelationships of the objects. The intended learning outcome that motivates assessment assemblage is that students become members of the artistic community. The goal is for students to participate in the arts community and to develop an identity in relationship to the arts. This is reflected in the way that personal stakeholders assess portfolios. Students participate as artists by exhibiting their work. Performance-based assessments and large-scale standardized assessments should also be designed to align with this goal. The end goal is that all stages of assessment align with the intended learning outcome.

This may be easier said than done. The proposal that portfolios be used for purely formative functions, and not for assigning letter grades, raises the concern that students will not value time spent on studio work. The acquisition of technical skill is an important achievement, especially for students who are being prepared to become participants in the art community. While students will be graded on their end products (through evaluation of exhibition), the significant amount of time they will need to spend developing their artistic process will not be a part of grading. The authors recommend that

performance-based assessments be custom-designed by each teacher. This raises questions as to whether the large-scale standardized assessments can be effectively aligned with the performance-based assessments of each individual teacher. The assessment assemblage strategy acknowledges that students will benefit if they can receive arts education that is aligned to standards. There should be a way to determine if particular instructional methods are effective and assessment assemblage proposes a way to get quantitative generalizable data without compromising the intended learning outcome it proposes as the end goal of art education.

### **Conclusion: Arts Assessment and Responsibilities of Instructional Leadership**

This paper has reviewed the benefits and drawbacks of several effective visual arts assessment strategies. According to ISLLC Standard 2, “an education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth”; this includes the functions to “develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress” and to “monitor and evaluate the impact of the educational program” (NPBEA, 2008). Ylimaki (2014) elaborated on the responsibilities implied by this standard: “effective instructional leaders use formative and summative assessment measures, as essential components of a comprehensive accountability system that connects assessments, instruction, and curriculum for the whole child within local communities and beyond” (p. 113). This professional framework suggests

implications for the stance instructional leaders should take towards visual arts assessment.

It is not enough for an instructional leader to implement an arbitrary monitoring system for the purposes of accountability. Any accountability system must support student learning and the professional growth of teachers. The accountability system must align curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Effective arts assessment is different from traditional forms of assessment, such as high-stakes standardized assessment optimized for the production of quantitative data for accountability purposes. Large-scale assessments such as the AP and IB portfolio-based assessments come the closest to traditional standardized testing in that they assign students numerical scores that allow comparisons to be made between students. However, these assessments face the challenge of quantifying the intrinsically subjective nature of arts achievement. Regardless of whether students' artworks are compared to exemplar ranked artworks or extensive written descriptions of criteria, the evaluation process is fundamentally aesthetic. Evaluators must consider the visual language expressed in the portfolios. In order to become fluent in this visual language, students must, in part, receive assessment that is specific to this particular form of communication. Students will not be able to excel on these large-scale assessments, or construct effective portfolios for university admissions, unless they have received instruction for technical proficiency and the capacity for self-evaluation. This requires integration of

content specific assessment throughout students' high school careers. Mastery of the visual arts cannot be drilled into students with standardized testing. Instead, students must receive assessment that is capable of being used to evaluate subjective qualities such as creativity and self-expression. This is why these assessments must be individualized and capable of capturing the qualitative nature of art making.

Familiarity with effective arts assessment can help instructional leaders make assessment-related decisions in other content areas. Instructional leaders can encourage teachers in other content areas to evaluate their students with portfolios. Portfolios are a versatile form of assessment. Collecting and periodically reviewing work in an art class helps a student become aware of his or her progress in art. Similarly, students can create portfolios to document writing projects in English or foreign language classes. The basic practice of compiling and organizing work over time could help students track their progress in a wide variety of subjects. In addition, the visual arts are not the only subject in which students should exercise creativity and engage in dialogue for the purpose of self-evaluation. Instructional leaders should consider how effective arts assessments evaluate these critical skills when questioning the utility of traditional assessments. A multiple choice math test may be able to determine if a student is able to follow the set procedures of a math operation, but it will yield little or no information about the student's ability to apply a strategy to construct and solve a unique problem. The basic premise of effective arts assessment is that it helps evaluate creativity on an individual basis.

An understanding of how these forms of assessments benefit students will help instructional leaders recognize assessments that evaluate creativity on an individualized basis in other content areas.

If instructional leaders wish to promote assessment strategies that meet the needs of students who wish to pursue careers in the visual arts, a number of suggestions are warranted. These students should be encouraged to take AP or IB visual arts classes if these classes are available. The AP and IB assessments provide credentials that can help students gain admission to university arts programs. Regardless of whether AP or IB classes are available, instructional leaders should encourage art teachers to assess students with portfolios. Visual arts professionals will need to create portfolios throughout their careers, whether they seek to gain admission to an educational program, obtain gallery representation, or submit a proposal for a grant. Portfolio assessment in high school is authentic to the career level assessments these students will face as practicing artists in the future. Students should also receive dialogue-based assessment as described by Willis (2014). Practicing artists must be able to talk about their work with other artists and with members of the community. An important part of any portfolio is an artist's statement that explains the concepts the artist explores with his or her artwork. Instructional leaders should avoid assessment strategies that promote compliance and conformity. This includes assessment strategies, like the KCCT, focused solely on generating quantitative data for the purposes of accountability. Holistic

assessment and assessment assemblage are two assessment strategies designed to address the administrator's need for generalizable data without compromising the purpose of study in the visual arts.

At the same time, instructional leaders should be mindful of the potential unintended consequences of implementing these strategies. Simply mandating that all art teachers will assess their students with portfolios will not ensure that students will receive effective instruction. Effective portfolios should be the end product of a rich instructional sequence that exposes students to the work of other artists and prepares them to engage in criticism. A portfolio can effectively document student learning and creating; it is an authentic learning task, but freedom and risk-taking could be inhibited if students must question whether every piece they create, even every brush stroke they take, will be good enough to serve the purpose of filling the portfolio. In addition, instructional leaders may be tempted to avoid the potential extra effort that is required to assess student visual arts achievement effectively by simply categorizing the visual arts as less important than other subjects. They could argue that it is too difficult to create generalizable data to assess the progress of art students at their schools so why bother going through the trouble. In fact, assessment assemblage and holistic assessment do provide ways to collect this data, although instructional leaders will need to expand their conception of what data is relevant for accountability.

Instructional leaders have the responsibility to familiarize themselves with assessment strategies and theories of assessment that are aligned to the

intended learning outcomes associated with study in the visual arts. These forms of assessment may produce data that is more qualitative in nature than that produced by traditional assessment methods. It may require effort to evaluate the insights these assessments provide, because the data they produce is more

nuanced than a numerical score on a scale of proficiency. Effective visual arts assessment strategies can provide evidence that students are developing as whole individuals who can use art to take personal responsibility and investigate questions of meaning and truth.

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