

Expert Reviewer Recommendations for Fine Arts TEKS

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PREFACE:

Students on a secondary 4-year plan towards graduation technically are required to only complete ONE FINE ARTS credit towards graduation completion. But because we do have students set on career paths in Fine Arts, many students will take every course level of their particular field of study in Fine Arts while they are completing their high school degree.

Students not necessarily pursuing one of the Fine Arts fields as a career, but still on a path of college-readiness will be required at the collegiate level to take at least 3-6 hours of Fine Arts in their basic core of college requirements for most liberal arts degrees.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Commissioner of Education have adopted the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards with the expectation that the SBOE will ensure the implementation of these guidelines with the curriculum expectations of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills mandates. Although the Fine Arts were not included as part of the core in these guidelines, the Texas SBOE can be on the cutting edge of essential knowledge and skills by viewing the Fine Arts as part of the assurance that Texas students will be educated with a well-balanced curriculum that will prepare them for all fields of study as they step into the higher education world and options for career paths in all fields of study.

Based on this knowledge and understanding of the course that Texas has branched out upon for development of its TEKS requirements, the following recommendations and suggestions have been made.

This expert reviewer's assessment of the Fine Arts TEKS is based on 20 years of teaching experience at every grade level and now actively instructing at the University level giving direction and supervision to students following the career path into Fine Arts.

- 1. Is a complete and logical development of the fine arts concepts followed for each grade level or course? What recommendations d you have for improvement?**

THE BIG PICTURE PERSPECTIVE:

At present, there are four strands for all the art and all grade levels:

- Perception
- Creative expression/performance
- Historical/cultural heritage
- Critical Evaluation (Response/evaluation)

It is my understanding the developers of the original TEKS were mandated to adhere to the same strands and guidelines for all divisions within the Fine Arts. The previous committee did a respectable job adhering to these guidelines that required the basic knowledge and learning skills of each section (music, art, theater, and dance) of Fine Arts fit into the same strand criteria. I'm sure it was a daunting task developing strands that coordinated with the intricacies of music, theater, art, and dance.

Although these four strands seem to serve the purpose of outlining the concepts at every grade level for all sections of the fine arts in **a logical and complete developmental form**, it seems **consideration should be made** into the implementation of additional strands that are a little more specific to eliminate too many descriptors under one strand AND making sure the strand definitions are connected to ALL of the vertical elements (art, theater, and music, and dance).

STRAND ONE:

PERCEPTION

The word perception is clearly an important term of ART vocabulary. It has creatively been adapted to cover music, theater, and dance although this particular word is not really part of the basic knowledge within these other fields.. Understanding the necessity to keeping the strands linked vertically, I would recommend reviewing this term and possibly including the verbiage :

PERCEPTION/COGNITIVE UNDERSTANDING

An example in Chapter 117.15 MUSIC Grade 4 (4.1) (B) under **Perception**, describes using "standard terminology in explaining music, music notation, musical instruments and voices, and musical performances: "This does not relate to the true sense of perception but more of a "cognitive understanding" about music terminology. Again, I recommend the committees look at this strand and add additional verbiage to the strand title to ensure that ALL of the art objectives listed in each field are correctly applicable.

STRAND TWO:

CREATIVE EXPRESSION/PERFORMANCE

At ALL grade levels, except Kindergarten, the Theater and Music fields, under (b)knowledge and skills, have at least two sometimes three "Creative Expression/Performance" categories. As a first year teacher when I was first introduced

to the TEKS, I understood the objectives and learning competencies listed but could not see the logic in the repetitive strand verbiage and category listing.

Theater and Music Classes demonstrate creative expression in their **PERFORMANCES**, but art does not perform. Art classes are involved in creative presentation of artwork. Creative expression is demonstrated in the development of artworks that are an extension of the student who creates the product. Drawings and paintings are not performed, they are displayed for viewing.(i.e. Art Show or Art contest etc) See Chapter 117.11 ART, GRADE 3 (3.2) as an example of this art verbiage that truly does not belong under **PERFORMANCE**.

Because of the early mandate to qualify all fields of Fine Arts under the same strands, this was probably the reason for placing Creative Expression/Performance in the same strand. What it does do is create some confusion for the teacher implementing the TEKS into his/her lesson plan.

One suggestion, to be authentic to the field and follow the regime of college-readiness, would be to divide this one strand into **TWO STRANDS**:

CREATIVE EXPRESSION

CREATIVE PERFORMANCE/PRESENTATION OR DISPLAY

The excellent verbiage already present in the TEKS under two or more strands of **Creative Expression/Performance** in each grade level would simply be adjusted to fall under these separate strands. The addition of presentation or display to the division of the original strand confirms the authenticity of All the fields of music, art, theater, and dance.

STRAND THREE **HISTORICAL/CULTURAL HERITAGE**

The verbiage of this strand is clear and succinct. It works efficiently in all the fields and all grade levels.

STRAND FOUR **CRITICAL EVALUATION**

It is important to note that in the opening introduction paragraph the verbiage of “Critical Evaluation” is used **but** “Response/Evaluation” is used under every grade level and field under (b) knowledge and skills rather than “critical evaluation”

In my opinion, , Student Response/Evaluation is a better descriptor than the use of “critical evaluation” as most much of the assessment in FINE ARTS is based on student response and the student’s ability to assess and make good judgments pertaining to Fine Arts. It is recommended to make the strand verbiage consistent in the introduction as well as under the (b) knowledge and skills clarification section.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ORGANIZATION OF THE INTRODUCTION USED IN ALL OF THE FIELDS AND GRADE LEVELS

For simplicity of reading and understanding, I strongly recommend reorganizing the structure of the introduction outline.

Presently, it is listed in the following manner:

(b) Introduction

(1)

(2)

This seems simple enough but the outline is very confusing although the content of the statements are excellent and applicable.

Under (1) the four basic strands are listed followed by a statement explaining the first two strands in an essay formatting.

Under (2) the essay form continues explaining the content of the second two strands.

Something similar to the following is recommended after the consideration of additional strands for clarification.

(b) Introduction

(1) One sentence stating the four basic strands and the purpose of these strands providing unifying structures for organizing Knowledge and skills etc

(2) In a bullet list style, take the sentences related to each strand and list them under number two.

Example:

Perception/Cognitive Understanding: (define accordingly by the field statements already in place)

Creative Expression: (statement)

Creative Performance/Presentation or Display:

ETC.....

2. Have the correct vocabulary and terminology been used? Where changes could be made for accuracy and/or clarity?

Overall, the correct vocabulary and terminology exists in each field of study and conceptual definitions at all grade levels.

ONE OVERALL SUGGESTION for review of terminology is the use of the word "**Improvisation**" especially in the music field context. This term is an important component for Schools of Music and NASM accreditation. An example where this verbiage could be used:

Chapter 117.15 Music Grade 4

(b) Knowledge and skills

(4.2) Creative expression/performance

(A) sing or play a classroom instrument independently or in groups

In this statement, improvisation could be inserted to ensure students are encouraged to create their own instrumental or vocal patterns. Thus ...improvisation....

Note: Improvisation ensures students are encouraged to “attempt” creativity in music performing and writing without fear of doing something incorrect. This is the ultimate of critical thinking and evaluation and development of creative and spatial thinking outside the box which is critical for many careers in the 21st Century.

This insert of “improvisation” should be a term considered in all four fields in terms of importance for college-readiness and work force careers demanding creativity and thinking “outside the box.”

3. Are there specific areas that need to be updated or reworked?

I believe that the committees of all four fields should consider the GENERAL Requirements be thoroughly reviewed and evaluated for Grades 6-12.

Course numbers are developed from these general requirements and class descriptors. The original TEKS developers kept the classification of these classes generic because of the competitive nature of Texas Fine Arts Programs allowing students to be placed in higher level courses if students met the criteria. What seems to happen, because many of the general requirement courses such as Choir 7 or Art 8 are so generic in description, that teachers start the year with students being placed incorrectly in classes because of the perception that each field such as art and choir are very general and students of any level can be mixed.

MIDDLE SCHOOL: 6-8

A review by the music committee of these general requirements and descriptors that drive the course numbers would be most important in helping middle school administrators understand why there should be a Girls Choir and a Boys Choir especially during this time of the changing adolescence voice. The Music Review committee could investigate the possibility of creating a class title such as Girls' Choir 7, Boys Choir 7 etc... to ensure the separation of gender at sixth, seventh, and eighth grade.

The other important element in this review for consideration is the possible creation of course descriptions that separate advanced from beginner students in these classes of art, theater, and music at the middle school level.

HIGH SCHOOL:9-12

The GENERAL REQUIREMENTS for Art is very thorough. Theater and Music follow with reasonable general requirement course descriptors.

It is recommended that the DANCE COMMITTEE take a look at better clarification of possible courses rather than just a generic descriptor of Dance 1, Dance 2, and Dance 3 etc. Schools with Dance programs tend to specialize in classes of ballet, jazz, tap, modern dance etc. This clarification again could help with correct distribution of students into classes by more definitive course numbers.

4. Are the fine arts concept/content statements grade-level appropriate? Are important concepts missing at any grade level?

The Fine Arts Concept/Content statements are very well written and grade-level appropriate. I do not see any concepts missing at any elementary grade level. I see very little need for change in the **general application of each concept at all grade levels.**

DESCRIPTIVE OBJECTIVES UNDER CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

I would like to suggest the committees take a look at what has been done with the MUSIC TEKS and the development of curriculum at each grade level by a committee formed through TMEA and TMAC:

<http://www.tmea.org/resources/teaching-resources/music-curriculum>

This document uses the TEKS and creates divisions within each concept that is a very helpful guide for the music teacher in demonstrating direct application of the TEKS to administrators. It is recommended that the music committee look at inserting these detailed lists into the TEKS to give a better directive of application.

Theater, Dance, and Art can review what has been done with the music TEKS and assess the possibility of application within their own fields. The descriptors in this curriculum document have the potential to aid in accurate application of concepts centered around the skills and knowledge that students should know for career and college readiness application within each area of the Fine Arts.

5. Are the Student Expectations clear and specific?

Student expectations throughout the Fine Arts TEKS are overall clear and specific.

A suggestion for better clarification and use of college-readiness standard expectations is the addition to the statement that includes the following:

The student is expected to demonstrate a working knowledge, understanding, and competency by/through:

6. Is the subject area aligned horizontally and vertically?

The organization of the FINE ARTS TEKS with its four fields, common strands, and organization of concepts is very thorough and complete. I do not see any need to alter this format at this time.

7. Should consideration be given toward adding other courses at the high school level to provide more options for students?

As discussed earlier in Question 3, I do think that all four areas need to revisit the general requirements and the course descriptions and course possibilities under specific levels.

Another consideration is the evaluation of career opportunities within each field as it pertains to the 21st Century. Classes could be offered that could lay the foundation for career opportunities in the Fine Arts Fields.

At the end of this document, I have collected a list of career options from the internet to stimulate discussion within the committees concerning addition of other courses.

8. Do you have any other suggestions for way in which the fine arts TEKS can be improved?

Teachers in the Fine Arts should be able to immediately look at the TEKS sequentially and mold lesson plans that ensure productivity and college-readiness for those who chose to pursue careers in the arts.

Committees need to look deeper into the application of technology into each of the field areas. At the time of the TEKS development, technology is briefly mentioned in the opening introduction paragraph used at each grade level. In the span of time since the writing of the TEKS, technology has revolutionized many aspects of teaching, presentation, and content development within the FINE ARTS. The expectation of technology use within the FINE ARTS should definitely be discussed and reviewed for further implementation to stay current with 21st Century Developments.

Another suggestion, to follow the College Readiness Standards, is creating a course of study that could prepare students who are choosing a career path in Fine Arts in a specific field.