

Promising Practices for Arts and Cultural Educators in Aligning to the Common Core

Created by Learning Lab Participants at the Culture at the Core Series

December 2014-March 2015

Selecting Complex Texts

1. A complex text can be a work of art, artifact, piece of music, dancer, etc. Arts and cultural education must expand the notion of text beyond the written word.
2. Select complex texts that help students come to respect and honor their cultures and the cultures of others. Use complex texts from multiple cultures and time periods to help students understand multiple perspectives, and explore different perspectives of the same historical moment from multiple perspectives using complex texts.
3. Curate complementary complex texts so that students can craft and defend arguments and lines of reasoning by offering various pieces of “evidence” to solve a problem. Students should have opportunities to create and defend claims taken from evidence from texts.
4. Choose texts appropriate to grade level, and make programming changes to ensure that student activities engaging with texts are aligned with standards.

Close Reading of Complex Texts

1. Provide opportunities to revisit complex works multiple times to build depth of understanding.
2. Make close reading of complex texts a regular practice and a significant part of every unit, and allot sufficient time to encourage deep looking at complex texts.
3. Questions should drive towards understanding of text and should prompt students to base their claims and interpretation on evidence.
4. Allow interpretation and synthesis of texts through movement and exploration with multiple mediums, while always keeping the text at the center of this work.
5. Embody author’s choices to generate ideas for work by identifying author’s intent through careful study of complex texts.
6. Create opportunities to identify and defend artist (or author, craftsman, etc.) point of view.
7. Scaffold texts with text-dependent questions to drive towards comprehension of complex texts.
8. Rather than share multiple texts in a study, select a small number (or just one) high quality text to dig very deeply into for an extended period of time.

Working with Teaching Artists, Docents, and Other Staff and Volunteers

1. Help staff understand the Instructional Shifts of the Common Core as a starting point to understand how the arts and culture education relate.
2. The Standards for Mathematical Practices and description of students who are College and Career Ready (pg. 7 of the Math Standards and pg. 7 of the ELA Standards, respectively) resonate with educators across the disciplines and are a great place to engage people in the opportunity of the standards.
3. Direct Teaching Artists and Educators towards goal driven practice-goals should align with standards-based instruction.

Design and Alignment

1. Let students engage in productive struggle. Give them challenging work, time to work through challenges, and supports, like time on task and opportunities for revision, (not crutches!) to be successful.
2. "Teach less and learn more" should be a mantra; teachers should work on depth rather than breadth, allowing time for students to dig deep into complex texts and participate in opportunities to revise and refine work to create high quality products.
3. Use anchor standards as a basis for alignment-let these help make connections across grade bands.
4. When planning instruction, focus on a small group of standards, and connect these to specific learning activities to ensure programming truly aligns in practice.
5. Focus on both process and thinking habits, as well as developing high quality products in the studio experience. The Mathematical Practice Standards call for precision and accuracy-this translates into high quality products for arts and cultural education.
6. Encourage students to comprehend and critique through carefully planned lessons that allow for multiple opportunities to build content knowledge and refine work.
7. Use CCSS ideas, language and phrases to set goals and design best practices.
8. Start planning with the standards in the first stages of design, rather than connecting to standards late in the program design practice.
9. Adapting teaching based on grade levels: Pick few grade-specific standards to design work when working with a specific grades of students. If avoidable, programming should not be one-size-fits-all, but should instead look to specific grade level standards.
10. Build coherence across programming for multiple age levels-find opportunities to design programs that build on one another as the student progresses through the grades. Coherence in arts and cultural education is important.

Time and Pacing

1. Allot sufficient time to interact and explore mediums and objects.
2. Allow for focus on quality not quantity. Structure points of contact with students to allow for deep analysis, with a focus on depth rather than breadth.
3. Be aware of the time that students need to spend time on practice, revision, and multiple drafts to get to a final product-most professional artists spend a very long time on something, yet we expect the same result from students in very short engagements.

Planning with Teaching Artists, School Partners, and Volunteers

1. Pre-residency planning should allow for depth in critique, revision practices, and opportunities to explore and engage deeply with complex texts.
2. Use Teaching Artist planning meetings to determine alignment opportunities between the standards and discipline specific work to focus the lesson-emphasize depth.
3. Teaching Artists should not be re-teaching classroom skills and content. Instead, arts should expand and deepen learning opportunities.
4. Education is not left out of creative process-be sure to incorporate content rich non-fiction to help students develop discipline-specific content knowledge.
5. Use arts/cultural education to make connections across content areas. Schools are an important partner to make connections across the curriculum.
6. Outside partners, like museums, must put value on the pre and post materials to encourage connections beyond programming time.
7. Focus on content-specific academic vocabulary so students can build content knowledge and access rich discussion through discipline-specific work.

Assessment and Evaluation

1. Support students and teachers in learning how to give kind, specific, and helpful feedback so that critiques offer opportunities for improvement.
2. Engage in speaking & listening as performance tasks.
3. Value professional-level discipline specific work in creating assessments. Evaluation should be an authentic and discipline specific.
4. Arts and cultural education is filled with formative and summative assessment opportunities; spotlight these performance-based assessments for the education field to showcase the value of meaningful work geared towards outside audiences.