

Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency

Implementation Guide for Local Education Agencies

2026-2027



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ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

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Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency: History, Objectives, and Incentives

On May 14th, 2019, Governor Doug Ducey signed the Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency into law. [Senate Bill 1111](#) had bipartisan support and was a grassroots effort from arts education advocates from across the state. Senator Paul Boyer served as the bill's sponsor.

Stakeholders from across the state of Arizona convened during the summer of 2019 to outline seal objectives and pathway requirements. The goals of the Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency are to:

- Celebrate students who demonstrate elevated levels of proficiency in the Arizona Arts Education Standards through personal expression and creative experiences in arts education programs.
- Identify pathways of artistic literacy that cultivate skills for 21st century success.
- Prepare students for college and career readiness, including active participation in the creative industries sector.
- Promote increased access to well-rounded, high-quality arts education across the state.

Arizona has a rich tapestry of support for arts education, and the creation of the Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency is a testament to the importance the arts hold in the well-rounded academic, artistic, and social growth of our students.

As a further incentive for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to participate in the Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency program, each seal earned contributes to the *College and Career Readiness Indicator* under the A-F Letter Grade Accountability System. Visit the [State Accountability](#) page for details.

Students who earn a Seal of Arts Proficiency, gain acceptance to the University of Arizona School of Music and matriculate as music majors may be eligible for a Fine Arts Tuition Award of \$1000, subject to available funds.



Arizona Arts Education

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) Arts Education team exists within the School Improvement Division's Title IV-A Program. The ADE Arts Education team will oversee resources, communication and training related to the Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency, and facilitate implementation, evaluation, and monitoring statewide.

The mission of ADE Arts Education is to provide support to arts educators, classroom teachers, school and district administrators, and arts stakeholders – including arts and education organizations, community groups, and service organizations – so that every student can experience the power and beauty of the arts, and the joy, creativity, and intellectual stimulation that instruction in the arts provides. Visit the [ADE Arts Education](#) website for more information.

The ADE Arts Education Specialist will serve the internal and external customers of ADE by championing arts education for the state. They will work closely with arts agencies and schools to create a unified revitalization of values and goals for arts education providing content expertise while continuously creating arts opportunities for our students, teachers, teaching artists, administrators, and policy makers. It is through these actions that the artistic literacy of our state will flourish.

Arizona Arts Education Standards

Arizona was one of a few key states to participate in the development of the 2014 National Core Arts Standards. In 2015, the Arizona Arts Standards were updated to mirror them more closely. These standards are rooted in the philosophy of process over product, and they center on the importance of cultivating artistic literacy for all students. They are sequential and include five recognized artistic disciplines: Music, Dance, Media Arts, Theatre, and Visual Arts. Any course aligned to one of the five recognized artistic disciplines is qualified for inclusion in an Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency pathway.

The four artistic processes are the basis for the Arizona Arts Standards for all artistic disciplines, and as such, should be the basis for all standard-based arts courses:

1. Creating
2. Performing/Presenting/Producing
3. Responding
4. Connecting

The guiding philosophies of the 2015 Arizona Arts Standards and the 2014 National Core Arts Standards mirror one another:

“These standards are being crafted to guide arts curriculum, instruction, and assessment in America’s schools. Toward that end, they emphasize the process-oriented nature of the arts and arts learning that guide the continuous and systematic operations of instructional improvement by:

- Defining artistic literacy through a set of overarching Philosophical Foundations and Lifelong Goals that clarify long-term expectations for arts learning,
- Placing Artistic Processes and Anchor Standards at the forefront of the work,
- Identifying Creative Practices as the bridge for the application of the Artistic Processes across all learning,
- Specifying Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions that provide conceptual through lines and articulate value and meaning within and across the arts discipline,
- Providing Model Cornerstone Assessments of student learning aligned to the Artistic Processes (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2016, p. 6).”

Artistic Literacy and Well-Rounded Education

One goal of the Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency is to promote increased access to well-rounded, high-quality arts education across the state. As such, LEAs who choose to administer the seal must be able to deliver high-quality K-12 arts education programming and make appropriate adjustments to district/charter policies and initiatives to ensure consistent implementation. LEAs seeking to provide high-quality arts education must employ appropriately certified arts instructors or teaching artists and provide adequate resources and support. High-quality arts courses must be standards-based and must emphasize artistic literacy and well-rounded education.

Artistic Literacy

“An artistically literate person understands that each arts discipline employs unique sign and symbol systems to make and express meaning. For example, while a theatre artist or a dancer might primarily be concerned with the ways that dancers and actors interact with each other, spaces and materials, a musician might consider the gestures that convey meaning from a conductor to members of an orchestra or choir as signs that must be interpreted accurately in order for an ensemble to work together. Visual artists must understand the nuances of line, color, texture, and form to successfully create and communicate. Conversely media artists must understand the languages of analogue and digital media if they want to determine appropriate methods of integrating technologies for the purpose of artistic expression. Arts literacy therefore requires an acknowledgement that each arts discipline has its own language, which is informed by its history and common practices, and that learning these languages requires in-depth immersion and training (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2016, p. 18).”

Well-Rounded Education

“The term ‘well-rounded education’ means courses, activities, and programming in subjects such as English, reading or language arts, writing, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, geography, computer science, music, career and technical education, health, physical education, and any other subject, as determined by the State or local educational agency, with the purpose of providing all students access to an enriched curriculum and educational experience (Every Student Succeeds Act. 20 U.S.C. 6301, 2015, Sec. 8002 (52)).”

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) defines well-rounded education as a student's civil right. Therefore, access to high quality arts education is not just fun or enriching, but central to developing the whole child. The Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency is a natural extension of this right and allows for the celebration and acknowledgement of students who choose to complete a rigorous course of study within the arts.

To determine whether curriculum is responsive to learner needs, LEAs may evaluate to what extent it

- Reflects students' experiences and the communities in which they live
- Includes a variety of voices and perspectives – past, present, and future
- Addresses the contributions of a variety of cultures
- Prepares students for success in college, career, and community

Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency: Requirements

LEA Requirements

Public district and charter LEAs wishing to administer the seal must:

Designate a Seal of Arts Proficiency Coordinator – Schools within a district or charter organization must designate a district-level coordinator. The district-level Seal Coordinator will be responsible for completing the annual application for participation, meeting all requirements and deadlines, and ensuring that seal recipients have met all requirements.

Gain Governing Board Approval – LEAs participating in the Seal of Arts Proficiency Program for the first time must attain Governing Board approval. Seal Coordinators will confirm this as part of the application process.

Apply to Participate – LEAs must complete an application to participate every school year. The application and timeline can be found on the [Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency](#) website.

Communicate Seal Requirements and Monitor Student Completion – Seal Coordinators must make information available to parents and students regarding the seal program. Implementation resources are available on the Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency website. Seal Coordinators must monitor students' completion of the requirements below by the given due dates.

Report Seal Achievement – Seal Coordinators will submit the State Seal of Arts Proficiency Achievement Report each spring, indicating the number of seal recipients per school and per discipline. ADE Office of Arts Education will provide diploma seals based on report submissions. ADE Office of Arts Education will publish a Year-End Report on the Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency website each year.

Provide Feedback – Seal Coordinators will have the opportunity to submit their feedback on the Seal of Arts Proficiency program and propose additions to the list of approved CTE Programs at the end of each school year.

Student Requirements

To qualify for the Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency, students must successfully graduate from an Arizona public district or charter school after completing:

1. All qualifying Arts and Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses with a GPA of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale, or the equivalent
2. Minimum credit requirements in one of the following ways:
 - a. 4 credits in one artistic discipline – dance, music, theatre, visual arts, media arts – or
 - b. 3 credits in one artistic discipline and 1 credit in a qualifying creative industries CTE program or separate artistic discipline – or
 - c. 2 credits in one artistic discipline and 2 credits in a creative industries CTE program or separate artistic discipline
3. 80 hours of arts-related extracurricular activities
4. A student capstone project

Arts Courses

Courses in the current academic year's [State Course Catalog](#) that use the subject code AZ05 - Fine and Performing Arts may be included in students' Seal of Arts Proficiency pathways. As part of their application, LEAs will list the arts courses they will offer for inclusion in Seal of Arts Proficiency pathways.

Career and Technical Education Courses

Arizona stakeholders have identified the following Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs as cultivating 21st century skills while fostering artistic literacy through the four artistic processes – creating, performing/presenting/producing, responding, connecting. Students may include up to two credits from the [2026-2027 Approved Coherent Sequences](#) of these programs in their Seal of Arts Proficiency pathway:

- Digital Animation
- Digital Communication
- Digital Photography
- Digital Printing
- Fashion Design and Operations
- Film and TV Production
- Graphic Design
- Interior Design
- Music and Audio Production
- Stagecraft

LEAs may request the addition of other CTE programs to this pre-approved list during the annual review process.

Arts-Related Extracurricular Activities

Students must complete 80 hours of arts-related extracurricular activities during their high school career. An arts-related extracurricular activity is any arts participation beyond curricular course requirements for which students are not receiving course credit. These activities need not be school sponsored.

80 hours is the minimum requirement - LEAs with robust extracurricular arts opportunities may elect to set a higher minimum for the achievement of the Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency. LEAs should provide students with a process for selecting, logging, and reflecting upon extracurricular hours, as well as examples of eligible activities. Examples include:

Dance

- Extracurricular practices and performance
- Masterclasses or conventions
- Festival performances
- Choreography hours
- Dance Honor Society or leadership council

Media Arts

- Video production lab hours
- Local TV station internship
- Summer classes or camps
- Animation festival
- Media design for school production
- Student film festival

Music

- Extracurricular practices and performance
- Masterclasses or conventions
- Festival performances
- Composition hours
- Music Honor Society or ensemble leadership council

Theatre

- Extracurricular practices and performances
- One act competition
- Improv performances
- Costume/Prop/Scene shop hours
- Drama Club
- Arizona Thespian Leadership

Visual Art

- Studio hours
- Community classes
- Workshops
- Public art creation
- Internships or apprenticeships
- Art clubs

Capstone Projects

Capstone projects represent the culmination of a student's learning in their chosen artistic discipline(s). Capstone projects should be meaningful and relevant to each individual student while meeting the rigorous standards of each LEA. Students may choose to work individually or as a group. Students may choose to focus on one artistic discipline or complete an interdisciplinary project. Example capstone projects include:

Dance

- Choreograph a work based on a theme/idea and compose an artist's statement
- Research a form of dance and present findings in a lecture recital
- Create an original dance film or photo portfolio
- Study a choreographer and create a video catalogue of signature movements
- Lead elementary or middle school students in a dance class or club

Media Arts

- Create a social media campaign that responds to a social issue
- Produce and premier an original film
- Animate a cartoon
- Research a film or media publication and write an opinion piece about media representation in that medium
- Design digital media for a production, performance, or installation

Music

- Compose, notate, and perform an original song
- Research a musical genre, composer or performer and present findings in a lecture recital or webpage
- Produce a local music event
- Compose or curate an original underscore for a film or performance inspired by themes of the work
- Research acoustics of spaces and present findings in an annotated recording portfolio.

Theatre

- Write and perform an original monologue or one act
- Design costumes, lighting, or set for a school or community production
- Design a workshop meant to engage people in dialogue through theatre techniques
- Devise an original show with an ensemble
- Direct a student one act production or produce an event

Visual Arts

- Curate an art exhibit in a gallery or local space
- Present a portfolio of original work inspired by research into an artist, artistic medium, or historical period
- Produce and/or create a public art project, e.g., mural, mosaic, installation
- Create original visual art lesson plans and teach an art class at a community space or school
- Self-publish a book of photography and poetry

Examples of recently completed student capstone projects are available on the Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency website.

Procedures that LEAs develop for assessment of student capstones must provide clear and consistent evaluation of student mastery of the artistic processes. Accountability measures must be in place to ensure students receive frequent and rigorous feedback throughout the process of completing their capstone project. LEAs have discretion to select their capstone evaluation tools and procedures, e.g., rubrics, checklists, reflection essays, exit interviews, and panel reviews.

Opportunities for Assistance

The Office of Arts Education is committed to ensuring all Arizona students have the opportunity to achieve the Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency. If your school is not currently able to offer students the minimum pathway requirements, please email the ADE Arts Education inbox – artsed@azed.gov – for assistance in developing alternative requirements and a strategic plan to improve arts education access at your LEA over a mutually agreed upon number of years.

Conclusion

Thank you for advancing arts education and giving students the opportunity to excel in the arts. Arts education is crucial for their future roles as consumers and advocates of the arts. As Americans for the Arts notes, Arizona's 14,522 arts-related businesses employ 74,688 people, highlighting the importance of preparing young people to contribute to this vibrant sector (Americans for the Arts, 2017).

Regardless of their future paths, students will benefit from the 21st-century skills developed through arts education—such as communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and creativity. The arts foster a society of empathy and joy, driving creativity and achievement.

Congratulations on supporting students who have attained proficiency in the arts. Please contact the ADE Arts Education inbox – artsed@azed.gov – with questions or feedback related to the Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency program.

Wishing you a year of artistic growth and success,



Kelly Montaña

Title IV-A Arts Education Specialist

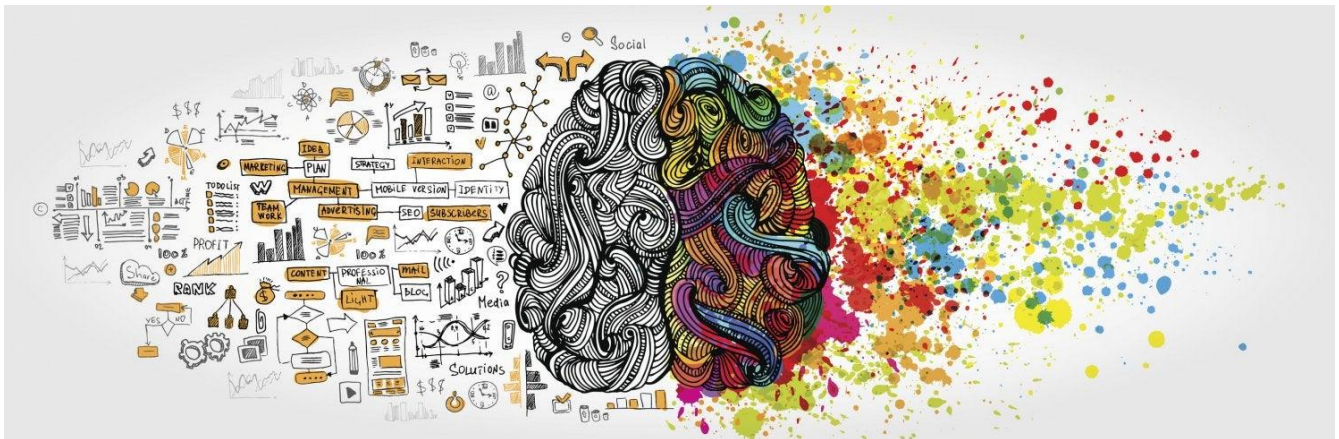


Figure 1: Left right human brain concept. #163171020, kirasolly, Adobe Stock.

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