



DISCIPLINE-BASED ARTS EDUCATION

Discipline-based arts education is a comprehensive approach to instruction and learning in the arts, developed primarily for grades K-12, but also formulated for use in adult education, lifelong learning, and cultural institutions. It is designed to provide exposure to, experience with, and acquisition of content from four foundational disciplines of knowledge – production, criticism, history, and aesthetics. Creative inquiry in these disciplines contributes to the creation, understanding, and appreciation of art, artists, artistic processes, and the roles and functions of the arts in cultures and societies.

Each of the disciplines provides a different lens or perspective from which to view, understand, and value works of art, as well as the world in which art objects are created. Several assumptions are made with the use of the word *disciplines*: (a) that such fields constitute recognized bodies of knowledge or content, (b) that communities of professionals study and perform in each discipline, and (c) that characteristic procedures and ways of working exist that can facilitate exploration and study.

It is the disciplines of art that provide the basic knowledge, skills, and understanding that enable students to have broad and rich experiences with works of art. Students can accomplish this in at least four ways:

- *by creating works of art*, through the skillful application of both experience and ideas, with tools and techniques in various media (art-making)
- *by describing, interpreting, evaluating, and theorizing about works of art* for the purpose of increasing understanding and appreciation of works of art and clarifying the roles of art in society (art criticism)
- *by inquiring into the historical, social, and cultural contexts of art objects* by focusing upon aspects of time, place, tradition, functions, and styles to better understand the human condition (art history)
- *by raising and examining questions about the nature, meaning, and value of art*, which leads to understanding about what distinguishes art from other kinds of phenomena, the issues that such differences give rise to, and the development of criteria for evaluating and judging works of art (aesthetics)

At the same time, although it is useful to define disciplines in order to grasp their principal roles and functions, these fields are fluid, shifting and intermingling with one another. The boundaries of the discipline change and expand as related interests and new issues surface.

DBAE is a comprehensive approach to art education. For example, works of art educate students about the world. Art helps us to understand how the many different communities of this increasingly interdependent world, both past and present, live and think and feel about their lives, their cultures, and their place in the world. In a comprehensive program, works of art provide the content for study, and teachers are encouraged to select works that will be meaningful for students. Thus no canon exists, no list of masterworks or indispensable items. The artworks studied depend on the audience in the classroom. Selected artworks need to be rich in meaning and interpretation, unique or interesting, and engaging for students.

A comprehensive approach employs specific strategies to deliver content in the classroom, such as inquiry-based experiences that engage students in making art, critical and historical investigation, and aesthetic inquiry. Talking about, writing about, and researching works of art are important strategies. For successful implementation, a comprehensive approach requires a support network of policy and administrative leadership, professional development, and a variety of curricular and community resources.

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