

OVERVIEW OF GRADES 7 AND 8

The expectations for Grades 7 and 8 focus on the consolidation of students' knowledge, skills, and strategies in the arts and their ability to use the arts independently and effectively to enhance their learning in school and to communicate feelings and ideas about their multicultural, multimedia world. It continues to be important at this level to differentiate instruction to address students' individual needs.

During the primary and junior years, students have acquired essential knowledge about forms and conventions in the various arts. They have also developed the ability to reflect on, monitor, and take steps to improve their arts knowledge and skills in all strands. The expectations for Grades 7 and 8 build upon this foundation. Intermediate students consolidate and apply their arts knowledge, skills, and strategies across the curriculum in order to learn in all subject areas as the content becomes increasingly challenging.

Teachers in the intermediate division should explicitly teach and model the use of arts knowledge, skills, and strategies across all subject areas. Explicit teaching and modelling help students to identify the skills and strategies they need in order to become proficient creators, viewers, and interpreters of art works in a variety of contexts and to move towards achievement of the expectations. Students require multiple, diverse opportunities to practise independently and demonstrate their achievement of the learning expectations.

The expectations encourage students to explore issues related to personal identity and community concerns as they interact with increasingly complex and/or challenging media; to critically analyse and evaluate perspectives in works of dance, drama, music, and visual art; to use inquiry and research skills to extend their interpretive and creative abilities; and to use the arts to explore and comment on topics of relevance that matter in their daily lives. Issues of social justice are often highly engaging for students at this age. Exploration and communication of multiple perspectives and points of view should be emphasized.

The arts curriculum for Grades 7 and 8 is designed to engage students in tasks that they see as meaningful and motivate them to learn about and create art works out of interest as well as to meet curriculum expectations. In addition to the materials provided for instruction, students should have access to a wide range of themes, materials, and activities that are relevant to their personal experiences and interests as creators, artists, and critically literate viewers. All topics and activities chosen for instruction should invite interaction, inquiry, creative exploration, and critical analysis, and should promote antidiscrimination education. All students, especially young adolescents, need to see

themselves in the material they encounter. They need to be able to choose independently to interact with content that has personal relevance in their day-to-day lives, including material that deals with issues related to fairness, equity, and social justice.

Dance

In Grades 7 and 8, students refine their kinesthetic awareness and use all of the elements of dance (body, space, time, energy, relationship) to create dance works that express a point of view about a variety of issues, concepts, and themes. Students at the intermediate level should be able to select a form of choreography appropriate to their theme and combine all the elements of dance effectively to communicate meaning. They should also be able to use technology and/or props to enhance the message of their dance pieces. Students apply their knowledge of dance; reflect on their strengths and next steps as dancers, choreographers, and audience members; and think critically about the role of dance in the media and in their lives. Students also demonstrate an increased understanding of the role of dance in various cultures, societies, and historical periods and refine their ability to evaluate the quality of performances by writing critiques of their own and others' work and reviewing dance performances.

Drama

Students in Grades 7 and 8 continue to focus on role play and the development of believable characters as foundational components of both process drama and theatre performance. In addition to role/character, they incorporate the elements of relationship, time and place, tension, focus, and emphasis in drama works they create, and apply their knowledge of the elements in analysing drama works. At this level, an issues-based focus encourages students to deepen their capacity for empathy and for critical analysis of issues. Because drama is a highly social art form, teaching, modelling, and guidance in the development of effective group skills are essential.

In partners, small groups, and whole-class formats, students create drama using a variety of forms, techniques, and conventions. Students continue to use the drama forms and conventions learned in the primary and junior grades to explore more complex material, while also broadening their knowledge of forms and conventions to include improvisation, devised scenes, collaborative play building, interpreting and performing scripts, reader's theatre, and docudrama. Students should also have opportunities to create, reflect, and analyse independently in a variety of ways (e.g., through writing in role, monologue writing and performance, journal reflections, visual representation). Through frequent, well-structured opportunities to discuss, speculate about, reflect on, critique, and comment on their own and others' drama work, they broaden and deepen their understanding and appreciation of drama as an art form. They strengthen their understanding of the function of drama in society and the roles and responsibilities of different theatre professionals. They also refine their ability to evaluate the quality of performances by writing critiques of their own and others' work and reviewing theatrical performances.

Music

The acquisition of musical knowledge and skills is cumulative and sequential, based on the learning from earlier grades. In Grades 7 and 8, students consolidate their prior music learning through a variety of opportunities for listening, performing, and creating. In Grade 7, students apply their knowledge of music, reflect on their strengths, and

determine next steps when creating and interpreting music. They analyse the role of music in their lives and the ways in which music has changed in response to a variety of historical, cultural, and other influences. In Grade 8, students perform in a variety of ensembles and use musical knowledge, musicianship, and creative abilities to create musical works for specific purposes. They develop their own learning profile and apply this knowledge to their work in the music classroom. Students in both grades should have opportunities to solve musical problems in groups and individually, and should demonstrate the ability to use logical arguments to support analyses and judgements of their own and others' musical efforts, while showing respect for the opinions and efforts of others.

Visual Arts

In Grades 7 and 8, students' own art making becomes infused with a variety of images and approaches. They are very aware of elements from popular culture and eager to incorporate them into their art. Students continue to make compositional decisions and to use a variety of materials and techniques to generate and produce two- and three-dimensional works of art, as well as multimedia forms. Through creative activities, students continue their process of exploration, discovery, and learning in the visual arts and broaden their knowledge and appreciation of the field. The transition to Grade 8 brings an increased emphasis on students' development of technical competence and a distinctive personal style.

The study of art in its historical and cultural contexts gives students insight into the visual arts both as a record of human achievement and as inspiration for their own creation of art. It is important to encourage students to view and respond to works from both the past and present and to support their growing understanding that artists are concerned with issues that are relevant to their own lives and societies. Students in both grades should have opportunities to investigate art works that represent a variety of historical periods, cultures, and styles. As they consider a variety of art works in historical perspective, students ask more refined and probing questions and gain a clearer understanding of what they themselves value. Recognizing artistic practices that resonate with their own personal and creative concerns can motivate students to think more deeply about their own art-making process. As students examine, analyse, and discuss art works, they become more confident and skilled in expressing informed opinions about and preferences for specific works. They also become aware that others' preferences may differ from their own and that multiple artistic solutions and interpretations are possible and acceptable.