

INTRODUCTION

The Archdiocese of Denver Guidelines for Visual Arts were reviewed and revised during the 2013-2014 school year. Art teachers from schools throughout the Archdiocese contributed their art expertise, their experience working with the existing guidelines, their classroom experience, and their time to assist in this process. We are grateful to them and their schools for their generous service.

The goal of the Visual Arts Curriculum is to provide a broad framework for the teaching of art in kindergarten through high school. It is divided into four content strands: Art Making, Art Literacy and Visual Communication, Connections (with the Catholic faith and other disciplines), and Art Appreciation. Some sample high school course outlines are included in the appendix. Actual course offerings at the high school level vary based on student interest and faculty expertise. Many of the Archdiocese of Denver Catholic Schools rely on classroom teachers rather than art specialists to deliver this instruction. It is the hope of the committee that this document will be a guideline to specialists as well as provide assistance to support classroom teachers.

In writing this update of the Visual Arts Curriculum Guideline, the committee used the existing curriculum guideline for the Archdiocese of Denver Catholic Schools published in 2009, the National Standards for Art Education published in 1992, the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards published in 2013, the Colorado Academic Standards (Visual Arts) published in 2009, “Religious Art: Catholic Teaching Down the Centuries” www.awakentoprayer.org 2013 and “Art History is Integral to Catholic Education” by Dale Artis Hackerman published in 2011.

Many thanks to the members of the committee for the dedication and insight.

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Catholic school education seeks to enhance the student’s love of God. The psalmist sings of God’s creative power: *“How manifold are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you have wrought them all – the earth is full of your creation.”* (Psalm 104:24)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, “Even before revealing himself to man in words of truth, God reveals himself to him through the universal language of creation, the work of his Word, of his wisdom: the order and harmony of the cosmos – which both the child and the scientist discover...” (2500).

Instruction in art encourages students to deepen their appreciation of God’s gifts to the world and to develop technical and artistic skills to express their own gifts and talents. It provides students with an opportunity for personal expression, awareness of their heritage, and appreciation for the role art plays in society. Art allows a student to touch that which is uniquely human. “Indeed, *art* is a distinctively human form of expression; beyond the search for the necessities of life which is common to all living creatures, art is a freely given superabundance of the human being’s inner riches” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2501).

Instruction in art also supports and enriches student learning in other academic subjects. “The arts humanize the curriculum while affirming the interconnectedness of all forms of knowing. They are a powerful means to improve general education” (Charles Fowler, *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 52, November 1994). “Knowing and practicing the arts disciplines are fundamental to the healthy development of children’s minds and spirits. That is why, in any civilization—ours included—the arts are inseparable from the very meaning of the term ‘education’” (National Standards for Arts Education). The use of art and of a student’s artistic talents in other areas of the curriculum touches a learning style that might not ordinarily be used in reading or math. It excites a part of the brain that may lie dormant at other times of the day. It provides the opportunity for alternative problem solving, creative expression, and non-verbal response. Because the Catholic school educates the total child, art should not be seen as an “extra” or as something that is dispensable in the school experience, but as a subject integral to the mission of Catholic school education.