

Transcript – Introduction to the Fine Arts TEKS - Interviews

Marylou Johnson, Fine Arts Coordinator (Retired), Clear Creek ISD: Scheduling Considerations

How can middle schools encourage students to take part in a variety of fine arts experiences?

Middle school is the ideal time and place for students to experience a variety of fine arts. In middle school now we have art, dance, music, and theatre. What a great variety of subjects for them to be able to try! It's very important to encourage students to reach out and try different things before they get into the high school programs.

How can fine arts courses in secondary schools be scheduled to support one another?

In secondary school, it's very important that we don't schedule all of our entry level courses at the same time or all of our upper level courses at the same time. If we have Art I, Dance I, Theatre I, and Music I in the same class period, students will have conflicts and not able to choose the classes they'd like to experience.

Why is teacher input critical in making scheduling decisions?

As a campus administrator designing the master schedule, I would put everything up on a wall with magnets, and it looked great. I would then bring in a team of fine arts teachers, and in a matter of seconds they could tell me where there were conflicts. Just allowing our teachers to be part of that decision making really helps. Not only should we ask the fine arts teachers, but I think we should also bring in the athletic teachers and coaches, as well as all the teachers of AP courses that could potentially conflict with the fine arts scheduling.

What are the factors that should be considered when scheduling time for fine arts in the primary grades?

Scheduling fine arts in the primary grades is critical to many areas of decision making. First of all, a fine arts teacher may teach several grades, from pre-k all the way up to fifth or sixth grade. Just during those times, the curriculum not only changes by what they're learning but according to the age level at which they're able to understand. In between classes, the teacher has to change out all supplies, because what a kindergartener would use in an art class is not the same thing that a fifth grader would use. We also need to think about the rotation of time that the student comes in to have fine arts classes. In a five day rotation, an elementary student may have 25 times to go to a particular class, and they don't just walk in that day to sing a song, or to do an art project and be done with it. It can sometimes take 2-3 days or 2-3 visits for a project to be completed, because due to the TEKS, we have to add a historical component. We have to add technical skills. They have to learn how to use a paint brush, learn color theory, and mix colors. There are so many elements to creating a piece of art work, or to playing an instrument, or using something in music class, that we forget that it takes multiple classes to just complete a project. We want these projects to be individualized for each student. When I see an art exhibit, I do not want to see all of the students having the same piece of art work that looks alike. We have to add in a creative component so that the students can create art or music that says something personal about themselves.



I like to see collaborative projects within the middle schools, such as a musical that combines elements of all the art classes. Such a project would give the students an opportunity to see a musical, see dancers, see the sets and the props perhaps done by the art students, and possibly see an art exhibition off to the side. They see the music people; they see the theatre students. It gives them a chance to see what they might want to try before making a commitment. I think sometimes when a teacher just talks about all of those parts of the fine arts, it's just not the same as when a student can see them for themselves. The other idea I've seen that works well is bringing fifth graders into the middle school campuses to spend the day going to the classrooms, looking at the facility, meeting the teachers, and seeing kids in action and at work. This interaction helps them make a better decision on where they want to start. It's all about providing the students an opportunity to make choices. When they get into the eighth grade, they have to make a decision on what endorsement they'd like to go into in high school. If they have the opportunity to experience the classes - even maybe take some mini courses - then they'll be able to make a better decision when they go into high school.

