

Arts Education

Newsletter

September 2023



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Welcome Back

I hope this message finds you looking forward to a year of arts education with your students. As arts educators, your role extends beyond teaching techniques and skills; it involves introducing students to different perspectives, nurturing their confidence, and cultivating an appreciation for the beauty around us. Your dedication extends beyond the classroom, influencing the lives your students will lead and the communities they will contribute to. Your role as an educator is significant, shaping not only individuals but also fostering creativity and self-expression. Wishing you a year where the arts will continue to play a valuable role in fostering discovery and personal growth, for both you and your students.

Grading with Equity in the Arts

Proficiency grading is designed to eliminate bias and ensure equitable assessment practices by focusing solely on a student's demonstrated mastery of specific skills and standards. This approach aims to remove subjectivity and potential biases that can arise from other grading methods, such as letter grades or comparative assessments, ultimately fostering a fairer and more equitable learning environment.

According to the article "[Grade Expectations: Why We Need to Rethink Grading in Our Schools](#)" by Lory Hough, equitable grading relies on three essential pillars: accuracy, bias-resistance, and intrinsic motivation (Hough). Hough further emphasizes that grades should precisely represent a student's academic performance, exclude nonacademic factors like behavior, and employ mathematically sound calculations and scales, such as the 0–4 scale, as opposed to the traditional 0–100 scale (Hough).

The exclusion of nonacademic criteria, such as behavior, from grading is of importance when striving for equity in education. When behavior is factored into grading, it can introduce subjectivity and potential bias into the evaluation process, as behavior can vary widely. Focusing solely on academic performance, as suggested by Hough, promotes a more equitable and objective assessment system. This approach ensures that students are assessed based on their proficiency in the subject matter, ultimately contributing to a fairer and more consistent learning environment for all students, regardless of external factors.

In conclusion, prioritizing equity in grading is essential for ensuring fairness and impartiality in educational assessments. By adhering to the principles of accuracy, bias-resistance, and the exclusion of nonacademic factors, educators can create a grading system that is objective and transparent. This approach provides a more accurate reflection of a student's academic performance and promotes a learning environment where all students have an equal opportunity to succeed. Equity in

grading benefits individual students and contributes to the broader goal of creating an inclusive and equitable education system for all.

To learn more about creating a clear and equitable proficiency system, please consider joining one of the Learning Target workshops listed below this fall!

Teaching Artists and Their Power

I had the delightful opportunity to participate in the New England Teaching Artists Conference at UVM, hosted by The Community Engagement Lab last July. This experience proved to be truly transformative, providing invaluable insights into the profound impact Teaching Artists have on schools.

Teaching Artists bring something truly exceptional to students, offering a unique blend of artistic expertise and educational prowess. With their flexibility, they can curate tailor-made experiences that cater to the specific needs and desires of each school, leaving a lasting impression on both students and staff. Through their immersive approach, Teaching Artists create an atmosphere that fosters warmth, inspiration, and creativity, elevating the overall school environment.

Beyond their artistic contributions, Teaching Artists serve as powerful catalysts for community cohesion. By harnessing the power of the arts, they bring students, teachers, and parents together, fostering a sense of unity and collective enthusiasm for creativity. This not only strengthens the school's sense of identity but also enhances the overall educational experience.

Teaching Artists are a vital asset to any educational institution, weaving the threads of artistic expression, educational enrichment, and community bonding to create a tapestry of learning that is truly exceptional. Their transformative presence in schools continues to inspire young minds and leaves an indelible mark on the educational journey of each student they encounter.

To find a Teaching Artist you can look at [Vermont Arts Council Teaching Artists Roster](#) or [Community Engagement Lab](#).

Arts Education Round Table

In August of this year, the first meeting of Arts Education Round Table was held at the South Burlington Library. Arts leaders from various disciplines across Vermont came together in a collaborative effort. With a common passion, attendees discussed strategies aimed at advancing and enhancing arts education across the state. The synergy among these creative individuals was evident as we engaged in meaningful conversations, exchanged innovative ideas, and set a course toward the future for arts education in Vermont.

If you share a vested interest in contributing to this dynamic alliance, we wholeheartedly encourage you to reach out via email to [Lisa Bresler](#). Your involvement promises to be a valuable addition to this evolving initiative.

Resources

NAFME - A Blueprint for Strengthening the Music Teacher Profession

This past spring, NAFME released a white paper on the importance of supporting music education through better teacher supports. I have read it and plan to multiple times. I hope you will to.

You can find the white paper on the NAFME resources page. [A Blueprint for Strengthening the Music Teacher Profession](#).

Arts Integration

New book published by Vermont educator Kelly Mancini Becker: [Learning Through Movement in the K-6 Classroom: Integrating Theater and Dance to Achieve Educational Equity](#). Great summer read if you want to think about how to use more movement in your classroom instruction. Practical book for teachers on how to use the arts (specifically theater and dance) to get your kids up and moving to learn in any subject area. Includes many ideas, stories, and lesson plans that align with standards.

To get 20% off use code: AFL02 at checkout.

Professional Offerings

Arts Learning Targets

Learning targets provide a framework for arts educators to guide their instructional decisions and help students achieve desired learning outcomes. By establishing clear and meaningful learning targets, educators can enhance their teaching practice and promote student growth. This professional development session will aim to finish the Learning Target Banks started prior to the pandemic. In completing the professional development, educators will be equipped with the knowledge and strategies to develop and implement effective learning targets, fostering continuous improvement and professional growth in their fields of expertise. Please consider joining for this full day, in person PD at the Vermont College of Fine Arts Campus located in Montpelier, VT. [Sign Up Form](#)

Tuesday, October 10 – Dance from 8:00-3:30

Wednesday, October 18 – Music (General, Band, Choral, Orchestra) 8:00-3:30

Tuesday, November 7 – Theatre 8:00-3:00

Artful Proficiency: Exploring Learning Targets at Shelburne Museum

Join us for an immersive workshop on Thursday, October 19th, from 9 AM to 3 PM, at the Shelburne Museum. Connect with fellow art educators as you embark on a journey to elevate your teaching practice through the power of standards-aligned learning targets. Dive deep into the art of refining your teaching methods by effectively integrating learning targets through well-defined units that uplift student agency. Throughout the day, we will explore dynamic approaches that leverage these targets to foster proficiency, all through hands-on experiential learning, including time in the Museum's galleries and classroom. Registration is free and will include a certificate of participation that may be used for recertification. Lunch is bring your own or the café located at the museum. [Sign Up](#)

Lisa Bresler

Arts Specialist
Proficiency-Based
Learning Team

Vermont Agency of Education
1 National Life Drive, Davis 5
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

PHONE:
(802) 828-0119
E-MAIL:
Lisa.bresler@vermont.gov

Vermont Fest: Embracing Innovation and Empowering Educators

The Vita-Learn Vermont Fest Conference is an annual gathering that celebrates the intersection of education, technology, and innovation. Hosted by Vita-Learn, a Vermont-based organization dedicated to advancing learning through technology, this conference serves as a dynamic platform for educators, administrators, technologists, and thought leaders to come together, share ideas, and explore the latest trends in educational technology.

Set against the backdrop of Vermont's picturesque landscapes, the conference offers a unique blend of insightful presentations, interactive workshops, engaging panel discussions, and hands-on demonstrations. Attendees can expect to immerse themselves in a vibrant learning environment that encourages collaboration, networking, and professional growth. [Vermont Fest Tech Conference](#)

We're on the Web!

See us at:

<https://education.vermont.gov/student-learning/content-areas/visual-and-performing-arts>