PLAYBOOK FOR PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT: MIDDLE SCHOOL

by Dr. Susan Lane

At the middle school level, the portfolio’s complexity will be more advanced than elementary, something close to what might be seen at the high school level. Students can build their portfolio throughout the year or over the course of their middle school experience. As with the elementary portfolio, it can be digital or physical. It should be curated by the student with some guidance from the teacher.

If it is digital, the student can upload the work to platforms like Artsonia, Google Slides, Seesaw, or Weebly. If it is physical, the work can be collected in tagboard folders, three-ring binders, or portfolio cases. Along with the artwork, portfolios should include an artist statement, reflections, and a demonstration of knowledge that could be provided in writing, audio, video, or a combination. Prompts and graphic organizers can assist students with those tasks.

ARTWORK

The quantity of artwork in a middle school portfolio will vary depending on the time students spend in art class and the purpose of the portfolio.

In one California middle school, students are asked to demonstrate growth before moving on to high school by providing physical and digital artifacts, including one from sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade art classes and two artifacts created outside of school (Wood Middle School, n.d.).

In New York City, students who apply for special high school art programs are required to submit 10-20 of their best work made mostly from observation with some from imagination or memory. The New York City Department of Education (2020) suggested that middle school students include original works in a variety of media that illustrate themes and broad interests as well as the ability to conduct an in-depth investigation of an idea.

When chosen by their art teachers, students in Grades 6-8 can participate in an authentic portfolio review by skilled adjudicators (New York State Art Teachers Association, 2012). Five specific artworks are required, including a self-portrait, resource-based artwork, art from observation, and two student choice artworks.

ARTISTS STATEMENTS AND REFLECTIONS:

In all portfolios, students are expected to provide an artist statement and reflections. Artist statements introduce the student to the person assessing their portfolio, provide insight into who the student is as an artist, and can be in an essay or question and answer format. If an artist statement is written in essay form, Linn (n. d.) suggests that it be a concise three paragraphs:

1. The first paragraph tells the reader who the artist is, why they create art, and their goals and aspirations.
2. The second paragraph shares the artist’s thought process while creating art, like how they created the artwork, what choices they made, and why.

3. The third paragraph shares how prior art and life experiences have affected the artist’s current work and what they plan to explore in the future.

Reflections usually follow or accompany artwork and clarify the understanding of processes, skills, and knowledge. Like artwork, the artist statements and reflections can be digital or physical.

Some examples of questions or prompts to guide students through the process of developing an artist statement or reflections are similar to those for elementary students and include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CULMINATING ARTIST STATEMENT PROMPTS</th>
<th>REFLECTION PROMPTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tell us about yourself as an artist.</td>
<td>1. I named my artwork ________ because…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What do you like best about being an artist?</td>
<td>2. I got the idea for this artwork from…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What is most challenging about being an artist?</td>
<td>3. The art materials I used to create my artwork were…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What does art mean to you?</td>
<td>4. The steps I took to make my artwork were…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Why do you consider yourself an artist?</td>
<td>5. _____ turned out really well because…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What kind of artwork is your favorite to make?</td>
<td>6. The one thing I would change, if I could, is…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What is your favorite subject to make art about?</td>
<td>7. When I made this artwork, I struggled with…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What is your favorite art material to use?</td>
<td>8. While creating this artwork, I learned…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Where do you get ideas for your artwork?</td>
<td>9. As I created this artwork, I incorporated the elements of…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What makes you keep going when you make a mistake or run into trouble while creating your artwork?</td>
<td>10. As I created this artwork, I chose to use ______ to express _______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. What does it mean when you say a piece of artwork “turned out really well”?</td>
<td>11. When people look at this artwork, I hope they…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. How has this artwork helped you reach your goal as an artist?</td>
<td>12. I am an artist because…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DEMONSTRATION OF KNOWLEDGE**

A student’s finished artwork cannot always tell the complete story of what they know. Questions for middle school students to answer either in the form of short answers, an essay, audio, or a video recording are necessary just as they are for elementary and high school students. The quantity and focus of those questions rely on the curriculum and learning goals. In some cases, they directly follow the completion of a project. In other cases, they inquire about the student’s knowledge at the end of a specific period of time. Amanda Heyn (2016) created and shared portfolio cover sheets and questions to assess general art knowledge that may be useful for student portfolios.
MIDDLE SCHOOL PORTFOLIO SUGGESTIONS

Portfolio

• Driven by state or national standards and the learning goals of the curriculum
• Format: digital or physical
  - Digital: The platform should be user-friendly enough for the student to upload artwork and artifacts with support from the teacher. Examples include Artsonia, Google Slides, Weebly, and Seesaw.
    • Assistance from the teacher to photograph artwork may be necessary.
    • The digital portfolio should be easily accessed by the student, their family, and adjudicators.
  - Physical: Art should be collected and stored in a safe place. Examples include a three-ring binder, a tagboard folder, a large envelope, a box, or an artist's portfolio.
• Curated over a year or the span of the middle school years

Artwork

• Collect a range of work that shows what the student knows and can do.
• It is curated by the student with some guidance from the teacher.
• The work can be digital or physical.
  - Photographs of the artwork should closely reflect the physical version.

Reflections

• Short reflections in response to questions or a short essay form often accompany the artwork
• Reflections are often completed soon after the artwork.

Artist Statements

• Short written, audio, or video response
• Written statements can be in response to questions or in a short essay form.
• This is completed once all work has been collected for the portfolio.

Demonstration of Knowledge

• A variety of questions prompt students to share what they know about art concepts, techniques, vocabulary, artists, styles, and culture taught in class.

EXAMPLE OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL PORTFOLIO: GRADES 6-8

The portfolio below consists of:
• Six artworks
• Artifacts from practice and experimentation as well as reflections
• Assessments of knowledge and skill at each grade level
• National Core Arts Standards for eighth grade are used since the assessment will take place at the end of eighth grade.

Work will be collected throughout the school year with the teacher’s assistance. The student and teacher will briefly meet at two points during the year to discuss the portfolio: second quarter and near the end of the fourth quarter.

Portfolios will be shared with teachers and parents during parent-teacher conferences.
Curation of Portfolio

**REFLECTIONS**

After each work of art, the student will create a written, audio, or video reflection that addresses these topics.

- I named my artwork ________ because...
- I got the idea for this artwork from...
- The art materials I used to create my artwork were...
- The steps I took to make my artwork were...
- _______turned out really well because...
- The one thing I would change, if I could, is...
- When I made this artwork, I struggled with...
- While creating this artwork, I learned...
- The element of ______ was chosen to convey -----
- I chose the principle, ________ to help communicate....
- When people look at this artwork, I hope they...

**RELATED STANDARDS**

**National Core Arts Standards**

https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/

- **VA:Pr.4.1.8** Develop and apply criteria for evaluating a collection of artwork for presentation.
- **VA:Pr5.1.8** Collaboratively prepare and present selected theme-based artwork for display, and formulate exhibition narratives for the viewer.
- **MA:Pr6.1.8a** Design the presentation and distribution of media artworks through multiple formats and/or contexts.
- **VA:Re7.1.8** Explain how a person’s aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment and impact the visual image that one conveys to others.
- **VA:Re8.1.8** Interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, art-making approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed.
- **VA:Re9.1.8** Create a convincing and logical argument to support an evaluation of art.

**EVIDENCE FOR PORTFOLIO**

Students will choose the format of their portfolio: digital or physical.

Students will curate works for the portfolio that represent growth in knowledge and skill.

Students will photograph, mat, or mount artwork for the portfolio.

Students will prepare an artist statement and finalize reflections for the presentation of the portfolio.

1. Brief reflections in writing, audio, or video will be created after the completion of an artwork and included in the portfolio along with the associated artwork.

2. Revisions of earlier reflections may be made at the time of portfolio creation.
## MIDDLE-SCHOOL PORTFOLIO GRADE 6

### Sixth Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>RELATED STANDARDS</th>
<th>EVIDENCE FOR PORTFOLIO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme:</strong></td>
<td><strong>VA:Cr1.1.8</strong> Document early stages of the creative process visually and/or verbally in traditional or new media.</td>
<td>1. Artwork that expresses identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IDENTITY</strong></td>
<td><strong>VA:Cr2.1.8</strong> Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of art-making or designing.</td>
<td>2. Artwork of the student’s choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>VA:Cr2.2.8</strong> Demonstrate awareness of practices, issues, and ethics of appropriation, fair use, copyright, open source, and creative commons as they apply to creating works of art and design.</td>
<td>3. Evidence of experimentation from photos, a sketchbook, or loose papers will be provided along with the art projects and experiments that preceded the finished work. Skills like cutting, gluing, mixing colors, modeling clay, and controlling drawing and painting tools will be assessed by those artifacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STUDENT CHOICE</strong></td>
<td><strong>MA:Cr3.1.8b</strong> Refine and modify media artworks, improving technical quality and intentionally accentuating selected expressive and stylistic elements, to reflect an understanding of purpose, audience, and place.</td>
<td>4. Written, audio, or video reflections following the completion of the artwork based on the questions listed above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SIXTH GRADE KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT

1. **A tint** is: ______________________________________________________________________
2. **A shade** is: ____________________________________________________________________
3. Two artists I learned about this year are: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
4. Draw two overlapping objects.
5. Color in this color wheel. Place the primary, secondary, and tertiary colors in the correct order.
6. Draw something in one-point perspective.
7. Create a value scale that ranges from light to dark.
SIXTH GRADE KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT

Name: ___________________________________ Date: ____________________________

A **tint** is: ________________________________________________________________

A **shade** is: ________________________________________________________________

**Two artists** I learned about this year are:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Color in this color wheel. Place the **primary**, **secondary**, and **tertiary** colors in the correct order.

Draw two **overlapping** objects.

Draw something in **one-point** perspective.

Create a **value scale** that ranges from light to dark.
MIDDLE-SCHOOL PORTFOLIO GRADE 7

Seventh Grade

**ASSIGNMENT**

Theme: **OBSERVATION**

Theme: **STUDENT CHOICE**

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**RELATED STANDARDS**

**VA:Cr1.1.8** Document early stages of the creative process visually and/or verbally in traditional or new media.

**VA:Cr2.1.8** Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of art-making or designing.

**VA:Cn10.1** Anchor Standard: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

**MA:Cn10.1.8** Access, evaluate, and use internal and external resources to inform the creation of media artworks, such as cultural and societal knowledge, research, and exemplary works.

**VA:Cr2.2.8** Demonstrate awareness of practices, issues, and ethics of appropriation, fair use, copyright, open source, and creative commons as they apply to creating works of art and design.

**MA:Cr3.1.8b** Refine and modify media artworks, improving technical quality and intentionally accentuating selected expressive and stylistic elements, to reflect an understanding of purpose, audience, and place.

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**EVIDENCE FOR PORTFOLIO**

1. Artwork that demonstrates the student’s ability to draw from life
2. Artwork of the student’s choice
3. Evidence of experimentation from photos, a sketchbook, or loose papers will be provided along with the art projects and experiments that preceded the finished work. Skills like cutting, gluing, mixing colors, modeling clay, and controlling drawing and painting tools will be assessed by those artifacts.
4. Written, audio, or video reflections following the completion of the artwork based on the questions listed above

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**SEVENTH GRADE KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT**

- **Art** is: ______________________________
- **A shade** is: ______________________________
- **A monochromatic color scheme** is: ______________________________
- Two artists I learned about this year are: _________________________________________
- _________________________________________
- Create a contour line drawing of something in the art room.
- Color in this color wheel. Place the primary, secondary, and tertiary colors in the correct order.
- Draw something in one- or two-point perspective.
- Create a value scale that ranges from light to dark.
- Use shading to make these shapes look 3D.

**Theme:**

**OBSERVATION**

**Theme:**

**STUDENT CHOICE**

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SEVENTH GRADE KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT

Name: ___________________________________ Date: ________________________________

A tint is: _______________________________  A shade is: _______________________________

A monochromatic color scheme is:______________________________

Two artists I learned about this year are:

_______________________________________

Create a contour line drawing of something in the art room.

Color in this color wheel. Place the primary, secondary, and tertiary colors in the correct order.

Draw something in one- or two-point perspective.

Use shading to make these shapes look 3D.

Create a value scale that ranges from light to dark.

_______________________________________

_______________________________________
# MIDDLE-SCHOOL PORTFOLIO GRADE 8

## Eighth Grade

### ASSIGNMENT

**Theme: CHANGE**  
**Theme: STUDENT CHOICE**

### RELATED STANDARDS

**VA:Cr1.1.8** Document early stages of the creative process visually and/or verbally in traditional or new media.

**VA:Cr2.1.8** Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of art-making or designing.

**VA:Cr2.2.8** Demonstrate awareness of practices, issues, and ethics of appropriation, fair use, copyright, open source, and creative commons as they apply to creating works of art and design.

**MA:Cr3.1.8b** Refine and modify media artworks, improving technical quality and intentionally accentuating selected expressive and stylistic elements, to reflect an understanding of purpose, audience, and place.

### EVIDENCE FOR PORTFOLIO

1. Artwork that expresses change informed by the research of an artist, non-Western culture, artistic style, historical or political events, or science.

2. Artwork of the student’s choice.

3. Evidence of experimentation from photos, a sketchbook, or loose papers will be provided along with the art projects and experiments that preceded the finished work. Skills like cutting, gluing, mixing colors, modeling clay, and controlling drawing and painting tools will be assessed by those artifacts.

4. Written, audio, or video reflections following the completion of the artwork based on the questions listed above.

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### EIGHT GRADE KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT

1. A tint is: ________________  
   A shade is: ___________________  
   A tone is: _________________

2. A monochromatic color scheme is: ______________________________________
   A complementary color scheme is: ______________________________________

3. Two artists I learned about this year are: ____________________________________
   ____________________________________

4. Create a contour line drawing of two overlapping objects in the art room.

5. Color in this color wheel. Place the primary, secondary, and tertiary colors in the correct order.

6. Draw something in two-point perspective.

7. Create a value scale that ranges from light to dark.

8. Use shading to make these shapes look 3D.
EIGHTH GRADE KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT

Name: ___________________________________________ Date: ________________________________

A tint is: __________________ A shade is: ____________________ A tone is: __________________

A monochromatic color scheme is: _______________________________________________________

A complementary color scheme is: _______________________________________________________

Two artists I learned about this year are:
____________________________________
____________________________________

Create a contour line drawing of two overlapping objects in the art room.

Color in this color wheel. Place the primary, secondary, and tertiary colors in the correct order.

Draw something in two-point perspective.

Use shading to make these shapes look 3D.

Create a value scale that ranges from light to dark.
REFERENCES


