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Introduction

In 1998, the Ministry of Education and Training published a new curriculum policy document for the arts for Ontario elementary students entitled *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: The Arts, 1998*. The new curriculum is more specific than previous curricula with respect to both the knowledge and the skills that students are expected to develop and demonstrate in each grade. The document contains the curriculum expectations for each grade and an achievement chart that describes four levels of student achievement to be used in assessing and evaluating student work.

The present document contains samples (“exemplars”) of student work at each level of achievement for Grades 2, 5, and 7 in visual arts. It is part of a set of three exemplar documents for the arts – one for visual arts, one for music, and one for drama and dance. These documents are intended to provide assistance to teachers in their assessment of student achievement of the curriculum expectations. The samples included in the documents represent work produced at the end of the school year.

Teams of teachers and administrators from across the province were invited by the Ministry of Education to develop the assessment materials for the visual arts exemplars. They designed the tasks and scoring scales (“rubrics”) on the basis of selected Ontario curriculum expectations, developed the teacher instructions, and field-tested the tasks in classrooms across the province. They then revised the tasks, rubrics, and instructions, using information gathered from the field-tests, including suggestions for improvement from teachers and students who participated in the field-tests. A team of teachers for each grade subsequently scored the student work, and chose samples of work that exemplified student achievement at each of the four levels of achievement.

The selection of student samples that appears in this document reflects the professional judgement of teachers who participated in the exemplar project. No students, teachers, or schools have been identified.

The tasks, rubrics, and teacher’s notes developed for this exemplar document can serve as a model for boards, schools, and teachers in designing assessment tasks within the context of regular classroom work, developing rubrics, assessing the achievement of their own students, and planning for the improvement of students’ learning.

The samples in this document will provide parents¹ with examples of student work to help them monitor their children’s progress. They also can provide a basis for discussions regarding student achievement and progress between teachers and parents and between teachers and students.

1. In this document, *parent(s)* refers to parent(s) and guardian(s).

Purpose of This Document

This document was developed to:

- show the characteristics of student work at each of the four levels of achievement for each grade;
- promote greater consistency in the assessment of student work across the province;
- provide an approach to improving student learning by demonstrating the use of clear criteria applied to student work that was produced in response to a clearly defined assessment task;
- show the connections between what students are expected to learn (as stated in the curriculum expectations) and how their work can be assessed using the levels of achievement described in the curriculum policy document for the subject.

The samples in this document represent examples of student achievement obtained using only one method of assessment, called performance assessment. Teachers will also make use of a variety of other assessment methods and strategies – such as tests, portfolios, and conferences – in evaluating student achievement over a school year.

Features of This Document

This document contains the following, for each of Grades 2, 5, and 7 in visual arts:

- a description of the performance task and the final product
- the curriculum expectations related to the task
- the task-specific assessment chart, or rubric, for each task
- two samples of student work for each of the four levels of achievement
- Teacher's Notes for each sample, which indicate why the sample is assessed at a particular level for each criterion outlined in the four categories of knowledge and skills for the arts (i.e., Understanding of Concepts, Critical Analysis and Appreciation, Performance and Creative Work, and Communication)
- Comments, which provide overall statements about the student's work
- Next Steps, which offer suggestions for improving performance
- the Teacher Package that was used by teachers in administering the task

This document does not include any student samples that were assessed using the rubric and judged to be below level 1. However, the characteristics of work of students who are performing below level 1 should be reviewed in relation to the criteria outlined in the rubric. Teachers are expected to work with these students, as well as with their parents, to help the students improve their performance.

The Tasks

The performance tasks for visual arts were based directly on curriculum expectations selected from the Visual Arts strand for Grades 2, 5, and 7 in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: The Arts, 1998*. The tasks encompassed the four categories of knowledge and skills for the arts (i.e., Understanding of Concepts, Critical Analysis and Appreciation, Performance and Creative Work, and Communication), requiring students to integrate their knowledge and skills in meaningful learning experiences. The tasks gave students an opportunity to demonstrate how well they could apply their knowledge and skills in a specific context.

The Rubrics

In this document, the term *rubric* refers to a scoring scale used to assess student work that is done in response to a specific task. Task rubrics are developed in relation to the achievement chart in the curriculum policy document.

The task rubrics consist of a set of achievement criteria related to the four categories of knowledge and skills, as well as descriptions of the levels of achievement for each of the criteria. The rubrics contain the following components:

- an identification (by number) of the expectations on which student achievement in the task was assessed
- the four categories of knowledge and skills
- the relevant criteria for evaluating performance of the task
- descriptions of student performance at the four levels of achievement (level 3 on the achievement chart in the curriculum policy document is considered to be the provincial standard)

The teachers who administered the tasks for this exemplar project were required to explain the scoring criteria and descriptions of the levels of achievement (i.e., the information in the task rubric) to the students before they began the task.

Use of the Student Samples

Teachers and Administrators

The samples of student work included in this document will assist teachers and administrators by:

- providing student samples and criteria for assessment that will assist them in helping students improve their achievement;
- providing a basis for conversations among teachers, parents, and students about the criteria used for assessment and evaluation of student achievement;
- facilitating communication with parents regarding the curriculum expectations, levels of achievement for the subject, and the criteria and standards for high-quality performance;
- promoting fair and consistent assessment within and across grades.

Teachers may choose to:

- use the task, rubric, and teaching/learning activities in this document with their own classes;
- use the samples of student work at each level as reference points when assessing student work;
- use the task and rubric provided as models for other tasks and rubrics, to be developed independently or in collaboration with colleagues.

Administrators may choose to:

- encourage and facilitate teacher collaboration regarding standards and assessment;
- provide training to ensure that teachers understand the role of the exemplars in assessment, evaluation, and reporting;
- establish an external reference point for schools in planning student programs and for school improvement;
- use this document as a basis for discussion of curriculum expectations, levels of achievement, and standards for assessment with parents and school councils.

Parents

Parents may wish to use the samples of student work as a source of information to help their children monitor their achievement and improve their performance. They may also use the exemplars as a basis for discussing their children's progress with their teachers.

Students

Students can use the document to:

- develop their understanding of the relationship between curriculum expectations and specific tasks;
- learn how a rubric can be used to improve their performance on a task;
- develop the ability to discuss their achievement with their teachers and parents more effectively, and to ask more focused questions about their progress;
- learn how to better assess their own performance and identify the steps needed to improve their performance.