

# NEW YORK

## INDIVIDUAL ARTS ASSESSMENT PATHWAY

REPORT OF THE NEW YORK ARTS BLUE RIBBON STEERING COMMITTEE

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### INTRODUCTION

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) contracted with three national experts in the arts and arts assessment to advise the Regents Blue Ribbon Commission on the Arts, the Blue Ribbon Executive Committee, and the NYSED on options to be considered for offering an arts assessment as a substitution for one Regents exam. The national expert panel developed recommendations for an assessment design for the future (as well as transitional options for students nearing the completion of their high school programs – current year juniors and seniors).

This paper presents information on plans from the New York Arts Blue Ribbon Steering Committee, which extends the program recommendations of the national expert panel with suggestions for how such a program could be implemented.

### PURPOSE, MISSION, VISION, ASSUMPTIONS, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

#### **Purpose**

*To encourage students to deepen and broaden their exposure to and understanding of an arts discipline, and*

*Demonstrate their proficiency in the arts through an individual capstone project that matches the student's interests and disciplinary focus, serves as an organizing framework for the student's Arts Pathway endorsement, and provides a systematic structure through which the student's achievements in the arts can be developed, documented, displayed for review, and assessed.*

#### **Mission**

*The Individual Arts Assessment pathway serves students in New York State by being centered on student learning and engagement in the arts, and honoring the essential contributions the arts make to our students' holistic development. The IAAP assessment process integrates best practices in capturing and assessing the complexity of learning in the arts. The IAAP plan values the professional contributions of arts educators to the assessment of arts learning; and acknowledges the need for economy and integration with existing resources to provide equity of opportunity across all students, schools, and districts in New York State.*

#### **Vision**

*We envision that all students in New York public schools will have the opportunity to choose to substitute an Individual Arts Assessment pathway for a Regents Exam to meet high school graduation requirements.*

This work is founded on the basic belief that the arts are fundamental disciplines and thus essential for the development of all students. Every student in our schools should have the opportunity to find and develop his or her particular voice for expression. The arts provide a process and products for communicating ideas, images, sounds, movement, and stories that are unique to our human character. The arts are powerful and necessary elements of education that augment, animate other areas of the curriculum, and provide meaning and a cultural context for learning. The arts capture and express the natural creative spirit in all learners and are a vital component to a balanced and complete education. They provide all students a means of understanding cultures, historical, political and economic influences, as well as prevailing societal climates.

### **Assumptions**

*Our recommendations are based on the fundamental assumption that student participation and performance in the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway will not be realized to its full potential unless there is a rigorous, sequential, standards-based curriculum and instructional program in the arts in all New York schools from pre-kindergarten through grade 12.*

This program should serve all students including those with diverse needs such as English language learners and students with disabilities, to achieve at high levels through engaging opportunities in arts learning.

### **Guiding Principles**

Several principles guided the development of the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway plan.

***Principle 1. Focus on student learning and engagement.*** The Individual Arts Assessment Pathway must facilitate student learning and engagement in the arts, and identify students who demonstrate significant achievement.

***Principle 2. Maximize the use of existing assessment resources.*** We recommend the adoption or adaptation of existing assessment materials and assessment strategies to the extent possible, and recommend different approaches or develop new assessment materials only if necessary.

***Principle 3. Promote an economy of administration.*** Assessment processes should capitalize on existing procedures. New processes should be feasible, affordable, and efficient.

***Principle 4. Make it adaptable to varied opportunity-to-learn contexts.*** Assessment options must be accessible to all students and adaptable to student interests and abilities. To maximize access, assessment processes must accommodate the varied opportunities to learn in the arts that are present in New York State (NYS) schools. Done well, this will provide equitable learning opportunities to all New York students and could serve to reduce student dropouts and encourage high school graduation among at-risk students.

***Principle 5. Honor the professional contributions of arts educators to the assessment of***

*arts learning.* Appropriately credentialed, certified arts educators at the K-12 and college levels, as well as eligible community-based arts partners, should contribute to and be engaged in the arts assessment processes where feasible and appropriate.

**Principle 6. Develop an assessment system.** The Individual Arts Assessment Pathway must employ multiple forms of assessment (direct measures, such as on-demand measures and those completed over time, and indirect measures, such as reflections and artist statements<sup>1</sup>) that are embedded in courses and reviewed and approved for this purpose, and valid for program assessment. Multiple assessment measures accommodate student interests, facilitate and support student learning, and provide multiple forms of documentation of student growth in the arts.

## ASSESSMENT DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The following elements are necessary for the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway to be successfully implemented.

- The Individual Arts Assessment Pathway assessment process should be designed to capture student achievement of the new arts content standards for New York, which in turn are based on the new national core arts standards published in 2014 (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014).
- Once the New York arts standards document has been finalized and approved, the assessment processes used must be broadly aligned to these standards and associated curricula in order to measure the content and skills the standards define at a level of rigor that meets state criteria for eligibility for a Regents examination.
- Evidence of assessment quality must be a major criterion for the selection of assessment materials. It is important now and in the future that the measures developed or selected be of the highest quality and meet established standards for reliability, validity, and fairness. (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & the National Council on Measurement in Education, 2014). Assessment measures not yet fully validated and/or documented can be used so long as their operational field-test status is noted (and data from field testing is used to review and document the measures before individual student data are released). NYSED resources need to be provided to finalize these assessments.
- To be comprehensive and fair, the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway should consist of a balanced and comprehensive set of measures that include but are not limited to:
  - (a) State or local course-embedded (through-course) or end-of-course assessments;
  - (b) An individual capstone project to be carried out by the student in high school, adjudicated locally, with anonymous corroboration from arts educators

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<sup>1</sup>**Direct assessments** of student learning are those that provide for direct examination or observation of student knowledge or skills against measurable performance indicators. **Indirect assessments** are those that ascertain the opinion or self-report of the extent or value of learning experiences.

elsewhere in the state;

- (c) Student self-reflections on their work and other indirect measures of student achievement and attitudes in the arts
- The three components of the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway assessment system should be combined by the student into a coordinated portfolio of evidence of achievement and accomplishment, which the student will submit for review.
- All evidence of student learning and achievement should be triangulated appropriately to demonstrate student growth
- This balanced assessment system assures that: (a) assessment materials capture the accomplishments of NY students broadly from multiple viewpoints, and (b) quality, aligned assessments are administered throughout students' high school program to encourage higher levels of achievement and to document that achievement.
- Student course participation and performance, as well as success on the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway capstone project should be recorded and tracked in the state student information system. Keeping a record of student success in meeting the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway requirements will ensure that the NYSED has ample evidence to verify the extent to which schools with active student participation have reduced student dropouts, achieved higher graduation rates, and effectively contributed to students' career and college readiness. We strongly recommend that by the Academic Year (AY) 2019-20, the NYS School Report card include an Individual Arts Assessment Pathway indicator to designate the percentage of students that attain graduation and who are college and career ready through the Arts Pathway.

## INDIVIDUAL ARTS ASSESSMENT PATHWAY

In this section, we present our recommendations for the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway assessments and assessment processes, as well as the steps in the development and implementation processes. The development of the Arts Pathway Assessment System should commence immediately so as to be fully implemented by the AYXX-YY.

### *Individual Arts Assessment Pathway Components*

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In order to meet current professional standards for educational testing with the level of rigor expected of a Regents exam, we believe that the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway assessment system should use three basic types of assessment.

- ***State Provided Course-Embedded (Through-Course) or End-of-Course Assessments.*** Course-level measures are essential to assure that (a) students are offered high-quality arts education experiences, and (b) student learning in those courses is accounted for in the final evaluation of student arts achievement for the Pathway.

Assessment materials approved for this Pathway should preferably be selected from those already in use in New York. NYSED can also consider accessing available

assessment resources developed by other states such as Michigan or Florida, or developing its own assessment resources modeled after what other states have already done for this purpose.

NYSED needs to develop criteria and review procedures to be used to review and approve these existing assessments. The technical review process should be carried out under the direction of the NYSED. We recommend the following as potential participants in this review process: external and internal assessment specialists, arts educators, members of the state's arts education associations, higher education representatives, community arts organizations, artists, and NYSED employees.

**For the purposes of the Arts Pathway endorsement, students would need to complete three or more courses in an arts discipline in high school (grades 9-12).**

- ***Individual Capstone Project to be Carried Out by the Student in High School.*** The capstone project within the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway is to be a culminating project developed collaboratively *by the student with the support and encouragement from his or her instructors* to: (a) match the student's interests and disciplinary focus; (b) serve as an organizing framework for the student's Arts Pathway endorsement; and (c) provide a systematic structure through which the student's achievements in the arts can be developed, documented, displayed for review, and assessed.

The goal of this component is for the student, with assistance from high school faculty (and others such as higher education and/or community arts educators), to design a project or activity in the student's area of interest to present her/his accumulated arts knowledge and skills at the end of high school<sup>2</sup>. Imagination, creativity and the acknowledgement of idea-making in artistic accomplishment are inherent in the nature of this assessment design and plan, since the IAAP capstone project is by design individualized and not meant as a "one-size-fits all" assessment.

- The ideas for the IAAP capstone project should be developed as soon as the student selects the Arts Pathway option for graduation. The project can take any form that is appropriate to the discipline, consistent with professional careers in the arts, and appropriate for and aligned with the student's interests and disciplinary focus.
- The end result of the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway capstone project is a student-generated collection of the evidence of learning and achievement of the NYSED arts standards, the student's artistic and creative processes, most often organized in (but not limited to) a portfolio.
- This collection of evidence is what the IAAP Review Committee will assess with support from NYSED arts associates. The primary components of the capstone

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<sup>2</sup> IAAP capstone projects include, but are not limited to: performances, productions, exhibitions, service-learning such as apprenticeships and internships (i.e., museum studies), costume design, script and playwriting, criticism, historical research, filmmaking, and digital media design.

project are: (a) goals/outcomes for the project or activity; (b) the specific performances or products that will be presented for assessment (including student reflections); (c) a timeline for completion, with progress checks pre-planned at periodic intervals; (d) explicit understanding of any student accommodations that are needed; and (e) the names and contact information for the student's lead teacher and IAAP review committee that will assess the final project.

- An IAAP Review Committee should consist of three to no more than five individuals who have been approved by the NYSED to participate in the guidance and assessment of these projects. (Note: this will require that NYSED develop a process for approving appropriate individuals to serve on these IAAP Review Committees, including but not limited to: secondary and post-secondary faculty, community arts partners, and professional artists.)
- Assigned NYSED staff will oversee the IAAP process at the state level and serve as NYSED's contact with each of the district arts supervisors and/or lead teachers who have been assigned as Regional Leader of the IAAP Review Team.
- The collection of IAAP information (the capstone project, through-course/end-of-course assessments and student self-reflections) are to be assessed by arts educators from K-12 and higher education through a consensus moderation process guided at the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), the large-city districts, regional, and state levels.
- The NYSED should provide the initial turnkey training of IAAP Regional Leaders and the consensus moderation process as well as provide on-going support through NYSED-assigned staff.
- In order to facilitate the sharing of assessment responses and the reviews of these by NY's arts educators across the state, an electronic online network should be created using a model such as the one currently being used in Tennessee to facilitate collaboration at the BOCES, the large-city districts, regional, and state levels, or another system suitable for this purpose.
- ***Student self-reflections on their work and other indirect measures of student achievement and attitudes in the arts.*** Students will be asked to reflect on their work on the IAAP on the individual pieces they assemble in their portfolio or collection of evidence, as well as on the IAAP capstone project, and other aspects of their work. These reflections should focus on what the student intended to learn, how well they view their work, and how they might enhance similar work in the future. The goal of this is for the student to demonstrate what he or she has learned in the IAAP process.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL ARTS ASSESSMENT PATHWAY ASSESSMENTS

There are a number of activities that the NYSED needs to carry out to develop the

Individual Arts Assessment Pathway assessment system by AY 20XX-YY. The Arts Pathway program and assessments will take a considerable level of effort, combined with adequate funding support. A number of activities will require adequate NYSED staffing, support from BOCES/large-city districts, other local districts, active participation and support from the state's arts education professional organizations, and ongoing collaboration between the state's K-12 and higher education institutions. Outside curriculum and assessment expertise will also be useful in building a technically-sound instructionally supportive assessment system.

Steps proposed to develop the components of the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway assessment system are listed below.

#### *IAAP Course-Embedded (Through-Course) and End-of Course Assessments*

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1. Finalize the new arts education content standards to be used as the basis for the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway.
2. Determine the courses for which through-course and end-of-course measures are to be used by local districts. If NY doesn't already do so, use the NCES course codes to standardize the list of courses for local district and student use.
3. Develop a survey (along with a cover letter) to be used to collect existing through-course and end-of-course measures from NY districts, as well as state and district assessments in the arts from other states, casting a wide net for existing resources.
4. Create a set of criteria for review and acceptance of existing assessment materials. Determine an assessment review process that incorporates both arts content and assessment expertise. Assessment review is an essential element of assuring that existing assessment materials are considered for use, and only those of high quality are approved and offered for use. This is an activity with which the state's arts education professional organizations, BOCES, and the large-city districts, as well as outside curriculum and assessment specialists should be engaged.
5. Conduct the formal review of each proposed assessment. This review should focus on the extent of alignment between the assessment and course content outcomes, as well as the alignment of these outcomes to the state's arts content standards. Information supporting the technical qualities of the assessments (e.g., reliability and validity data and the existence of technical reports and documentation of assessment procedures) should also be reviewed. Feedback from the review should be submitted to the provider of the assessment. At the conclusion of the review, the assessment may be given one of three statuses: (1) approved for use as is; (2) modifications are necessary, but the assessment can be used as an operational field test; or (3) the assessment is not suitable for use.
6. Conduct operational field testing of any newly developed or selected through-course or end-of-course assessment materials that require augmentation, modification, or further technical documentation to ensure that the assessments meet established standards for educational testing and rigor for Regents

examinations, and provide useful information to instructors and their students. It is important that field-testing occurs with representative student samples from in a range of urban, suburban, and rural districts across New York State. Review the operational field test data to remove any poorly functioning items before reporting individual student information. Update the assessment instruments.

7. Prepare a list of available assessment instruments and provide this to local school districts, updating it periodically as new instruments become available.
8. NYSED should have a secure site on which to provide the assessments to authorized users.

#### *Capstone Projects.*

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1. Develop a panel of interested arts assessment specialists and NYSED personnel to serve as a standing focus group for initial input, to review drafts of materials and procedures, and to serve as pilot testers when the general framework and protocols for the IAAP are drafted. This standing advisory group should include a small but representative sample of arts educators and their students.
2. Draft overall informational pieces for the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway opportunity and options. These should include separate pieces designed to inform students and their families, arts educators, and school administrators about the IAAP, provide an overview of the components, the requirements, and the assessment processes to be used. It is suggested that these be drafted at the outset since they will set the stage for the more detailed procedural manuals that are also required (see #3 below).
3. Draft separate IAAP procedural materials for both students and instructors. These manuals should include sections that describe the following.
  - (a) The number and nature of the required arts courses that high school students are required to take.
  - (b) Use of end-of-course/through-course assessments to document student learning;
  - (c) The idea or focus of the culminating project and its intended outcomes or products;
  - (d) What sorts of projects meet state criteria for eligibility;
  - (e) The process to be used by students to propose projects and for approval of the project plans;
  - (f) How students might carry out their proposed project, the sorts of support they might receive while doing so, and how their work will be monitored by the faculty on the project committee; and
  - (g) The process for proposal review and approval by school-based educators.

The materials to be used by students to present their projects, to record the efforts of students (specifications for print and video media) and for the review of the projects through a consensus moderation process should be clarified and understood.

Members of state arts education professional organizations and faculty in higher



education institutions could be engaged to assist with this process, and to provide validity evidence to support the framework for its intended use. Outside expertise can be used to create these drafts.

4. The draft materials should be reviewed by NYSED curriculum and assessment staffs as well as by the panel of interested HS arts educators (see #1 above). Make any necessary revisions to the materials.
5. Pilot test the IAAP with a small sample of high school students and high school faculty (and supportive community arts educators and/or higher education faculty) drawn from the panel of interested HS arts educators (see #1 above). Once the Individual Arts Assessment Project assessment materials and resources are ready, the small but representative sample of high school students (in schools that represent varied opportunity to learn contexts) pilot test the assessment process in the AY 20XX-YY.
6. Members of the NY Blue Ribbon Arts Steering Committee should seek permission from the pilot sites to attend/sit in on student presentations (either virtually or in person) so as to observe the nature of students' presentations, review the quality of their submitted collections of evidence, and determine if they concur with the decisions made by the IAAP Review Teams. Although the decisions made at the time of the review are deemed to be final, the NY Blue Ribbon Arts Steering Committee might use any disagreements as the basis for revisions to the assessment or assessment review directions or procedures.
7. Revise the IAAP procedural materials as necessary.
8. Conduct a wider-scale field in the AY 20XX-YY. This field test should include participants not involved with the development of the project or materials so as to more fully test the capability of the resources to guide a technically sound assessment process. This field test should include multiple districts from two or more BOCES and large-city school districts.
9. Select or develop an electronic system to upload student portfolios and the materials contained in them (e.g., written work, assessment reports, audio and video files, and other student documents) that will permit authorized users to review, annotate, and to score student work. This may be an available system (e.g., the Tennessee GLADiS system) adapted for this purpose or a system designed specifically to facilitate the uploading of student information and the review of it.
10. Pilot test the proposed consensus moderation process, starting in a few BOCES and large-city districts. The consensus moderation process should also be developed and pilot tested in one or possibly two BOCES and large-city districts (in the summer of 20XX) and field-tested on a wider-scale basis in a number of BOCES and large-city districts (in the summer of 20YY). The consensus moderation process should engage high school and college arts educators in the review of the work of students.
11. Pilot- and field-test data should be reviewed annually and used to refine and enhance the assessment materials and the consensus moderation procedures.

## Student Self-Reflections

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1. Collect existing student self-reflection protocols from NY school districts. These might be for students to reflect on their work on individual arts pieces or overall on a collection of such works.
2. Review the submissions to determine which might contain the elements for one or more state-provided templates suitable for each arts discipline as well as the types of work for which each might be used. Review the submissions for overall student collections and select/adapt/develop those templates most likely to be suitable for use in the IAAP program (given the range of likely proposed student capstone projects). These templates should address a specific set of provided questions, and also include a 'now tell us anything you haven't already' section.
3. Provide the selected student self-reflection protocols to NY educators for use in the pilot test (see #5 above) of the capstone projects.
4. Collect feedback from teachers and students following the pilot and field test (noting whether and how educators or students may have modified the protocols).
5. Use the feedback to revise and improve the protocols before the field test.
6. Provide the revised student self-reflection protocols to NY educators for use in the field test (see #8 above) of the capstone projects.
7. Collect feedback from teachers and students following the field test (noting whether and how educators or students may have modified the protocols).
8. Use the feedback to revise and improve the protocols.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE FINAL ARTS ASSESSMENT PATHWAY

1. The Individual Arts Assessment Pathway assessment system should be announced to *eighth graders* in early 20XX as a program that begins for them when they are *ninth graders* in the AY 2016-17. These are students who will graduate from high school in AY 20XX-YY. The final plan should serve as the basis for this announcement.
2. Announcing the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway assessment system plan for eighth grade students will permit the NYSED to position the program in terms of what it will *eventually* be, and not defined by transitional assessment options necessary in the interim. Hopefully, educators, students, and parents do not perceive the program as limited by the assessments that are used before the program is fully implemented.
3. Announcing the final Individual Arts Assessment Pathway assessment system process in AY 20XX-YY will permit ninth grade students in AY 20XX-YY to plan a course of study in advance that includes taking the necessary arts (and other) courses in high school. This advanced notice will prepare these students to enroll in the courses necessary to qualify for the Regents endorsement. An accommodation

should be provided for students who decide to pursue the Arts Pathway endorsement after ninth grade.

4. While this timeline indicates when the assessment strategies and resources will be available to students, these assessments, the attendant resources, and professional development for educators need to be developed starting immediately, in the AY 20XX-YY. The NYSED *cannot wait* to start on the assessment options or the assessments will not be available on time.
5. Starting work on the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway assessment system in AY 20XX-YY will permit time for NY educators and students to help create these resources, and for pilot testing and field-testing to occur in select NY school districts during AY 20XX-YY through AY 20XX-YY. This development, pilot testing, and field-testing process is essential for the successful development and implementation of the assessment system.

AY 20XX-YY

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- Help collect information on available end-of-course (EOC) exams. Available resources for high school through-course and end-of-course assessment should be collected, reviewed, catalogued.
- Create a process for review of local district, state, and other assessments that can be used to approve high school through-course and end-of-course assessments.
- Develop criteria for the student-developed portfolio waivers

AY AY 20XX-YY through AY 20XX-YY

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- Carry out the review of existing assessments, using the state's arts education professional organizations and others.
- Help develop the assessment blueprints for the model state-developed high school through-course and end-of-course assessments.
- Help develop the model state-developed high school through-course and end-of-course assessments.

AY 20XX-YY ARTS PATHWAY ASSESSMENT SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION

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- Develop the student and educator protocols for the IAAP capstone projects, using the state's arts education professional organizations, higher education institutions, community arts organizations, and others.
- Create a plan for moderating collections of student work through consensus from the high school through-course and end-of-course assessments as well as the IAAP capstone projects.
- Assist the SED to pilot test the consensus moderation model in a few sites across the state.

- Assist the SED to field test the consensus moderation model in representative sites across the state.
- Revise and refine the Individual Arts Assessment Pathway assessments protocols, based on field test results, using the state's arts education professional organizations, higher education institutions, and others.
- Help create the online software to provide the state-collected and state-developed model high school through-course and end-of-course assessments to local districts.
- Help create the online software to collect student work on the model high school through-course and end-of-course assessments and results from the Individual Arts Assessment Plans from local districts for local, regional, and state review.
- Assist the SED to implement the consensus moderation model throughout the state.