



TEAM Observation Considerations

Visual Art Educators | October 2026



Introduction

A visual art classroom allows an observer the opportunity to gather evidence of instructional practice in a setting where students' work may look different than other classroom settings. Strong instructional practice leads to improved student outcomes, and visual art is no exception. A visual art educator teaches from the [Tennessee Academic Standards for Fine Arts Education](#). These standards are purposefully broad to accommodate localized curriculum development. Each district has implemented curricula to support the needs of their learners. Visual art educators are tasked with creating developmentally appropriate learning experiences that meet these standards and curricula.

In this document you will find information on:

- Pre-Conference Considerations
- Observer Considerations: Evidence Collection
- Observer Considerations: Preparing for the Post-Conference

Literacy is essential across all academic areas because it enables students to learn and communicate effectively. The Tennessee Standards for Visual Art emphasize artistic literacy, including visual literacy (the ability to interpret, create, and evaluate images) and creative literacy (the capacity to integrate thinking and implementation). Visual art teachers should integrate multiple aspects of literacy (e.g., visual, technical, creative, cultural, digital, or media) within their discipline, aligning with the Tennessee Standards for Visual Art.

In a Visual Art class, the approach to literacy, ways students interact with the classroom environment, how they are positioned in the classroom space, and the use of instructional materials may make certain indicators particularly nuanced. This document aims to clarify some of these issues and to promote robust communication between educator and evaluator.

Visual art education:

- Creates opportunities for high-level critical thinking, artistic expression, and skill development.
- Offers opportunities to work independently and collectively.
- Connects diverse cultures, practices, and values rooted in Tennessee and extending beyond.
- Requires continuous problem-solving and intentional decision-making.

In visual art education, long-term goals shape instruction, as individual lessons rarely encapsulate a complete learning objective. This is especially true where infrequent meetings and short class times extend learning over time. Lessons may integrate standards from the Create, Present, Respond, and Connect domains, but the primary focus of instruction will frequently be sourced from standards in the Create domain.

Focus of each domain:

- **Create:** Creation and production of art.
- **Present:** Curation, display, and preservation of artwork and the documentation of artmaking.
- **Respond:** Perception, interpretation, and evaluation of artistic work.

- **Connect:** Personal or cultural reflections, interdisciplinary connections, and artwork related to students' own lives and experiences.

While this document focuses on the work of visual art educators, the approach to using the TEAM rubric remains consistent across content areas.

Pre-Conference Considerations:

The pre-conference conversation should be used for intentional reflection on lesson goals, instructional activities, and assessment strategies. This allows teachers to articulate the rationale behind their planning decisions, examine how those decisions support student learning, and consider how evidence of learning over time will be gathered and interpreted.

For more information about pre-conferences, sample discussion questions, educator preparation guidance, and rubric connections, see the [TEAM Teacher Evaluator Handbook](#).

Observer Considerations: Evidence Collection

Evidence for performance levels may come from pre-conference discussions, classroom observations, and follow-up conversations before the post-conference. Observers should focus on understanding the educator's instructional approach and, more importantly, how students respond to the strategies used. Gathering evidence on how the educator moves students toward mastery is essential. Additionally, understanding the unique layout and workflow of a visual art classroom environment is crucial, as strong instructional practices are present but may appear differently than in other subjects. Instructional time may balance direct instruction and studio time. Studio time is intentional, dedicated time for students to develop their artwork in personalized and visible ways through making decisions about materials, concepts, and possibilities. The following examples of evidence and considerations are provided for evaluators and educators. This list is not exhaustive and may vary depending on the specific dynamics and characteristics of each classroom.

Planning Rubric

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Considerations
Instructional Plans	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • Planning notes showing how the teacher is aligning and sequencing student activities to the standards. • Discussions with the educator about how instruction builds on prior learning or prepares students for future learning. • Discussions with the educator about how lessons address individual students' needs. Because the standards are based on sequential achievement levels rather than grade levels, the level at which the observed class is functioning should be discussed. • Planning notes indicating how frequently the teacher provides opportunities for students to reflect and give or receive feedback about their learning. • Discussions surrounding accommodations and how they are embedded within instruction and studio practice to increase accessibility for all learners.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • Teachers may provide opportunities for students to work on individual goals, i.e., studio time, while still in a whole group setting. • Goals are rarely set and met in a single lesson. Due to scheduling, objectives and sub-objectives may be taught over a period of several weeks. • Because students often participate in visual art courses across multiple years, instructional planning for individual goals and accommodations may incorporate data from previous classes. This includes past performance, growth, artistic development, and prior supports, to inform current instruction and long-term student progress. • Due to the large and diverse population of students across multiple classes and grade levels served, accommodations could be visible through student choice, adaptive tools and resources, and flexible learning pathways. • Standards are building blocks that form a comprehensive, sequential education and describe student learning. Included with each foundation are Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions that connect each grade level and provide a context for the standards.

Student Work	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • Discussions between the educator and evaluator that provide insight into the planned student work, which in a visual art classroom may include a variety of assignments ranging from exercises to develop skill and conceptual proficiency to open-ended assignments that incorporate student choice and result in a variety of outcomes. • Discussions between the educator and evaluator that provide insight into how the teacher plans to support students' thinking in their work. In a visual art class, this may involve questioning or providing feedback on work in progress. • Discussions between the educator and evaluator that provide insight into how the teacher uses writing assignments to allow students to share their thinking and engage in problem-solving.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • Mastery of a standard may be accomplished through varied pathways, recognizing that students demonstrate learning in different but equally valid ways. • Artistic text may incorporate various formats (e.g., audio, video) and may include tangible art or digital image(s) of student, historical, and contemporary art; contextual information (e.g., artist statement, biographical information), or research and planning. • Text is often presented as images and could also include contextual information, artist biographies, or artist statements. • Working with text may look like close readings of artwork paired with artful thinking strategies or visible thinking. • Writing may not occur in every lesson but may occur when appropriate in the unit of study. • While there are possible written elements to student assignments, student understanding and interpretation in this setting are primarily demonstrated through visual encoding. • Writing in an art classroom should be used to enhance learning by making student thinking visible and supporting deeper engagement with the artistic process. • Writing in the Visual Art Classroom may include: concept development, identification and analysis of artworks, critiques, student to student feedback, goal setting and self-reflection of growth, artist statements with use of artistic terminology, and images created in response to prompts or questioning.
---------------------	---	--

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Considerations
Assessment	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • Planning notes that describe the ways students can demonstrate mastery or progress toward mastery of a standard. • Discussions about the use of informal assessments during the unit of study, which in a visual art classroom may include bellringers, gestures, sketches, or exit tickets. • Discussions about how the teacher assesses and evaluates students' progression toward mastery of the standard, which may include considerations for differentiation, rubrics, or applications beyond the classroom (e.g., externally adjudicated or community exhibitions). • Discussions surrounding previously completed student work or work in progress that support the planning of instruction for upcoming lessons.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • Informal assessment is continually happening in visual arts classes. This may look like noting how students are developing ideas, moving through artistic processes, and using materials, techniques, and tools. The ability of the educator to provide feedback in real-time is a core competency. • Multiple forms of assessment may be observed throughout a lesson and across multiple class sessions. Completed artwork or summative assessments may not occur during every class period. • Assessment may take a variety of forms, including teacher conferencing, observation of artistic processes, sketchbooks or planning documents, peer critiques, self-reflections, artist statements, portfolios, demonstrations of technique, progress checks, and evaluation of completed artwork aligned to lesson objectives and standards. • The visual arts teacher may move throughout the studio to informally assess students' works in progress by observing techniques, asking clarifying questions, and noting areas of need, then use this information to adjust instruction in real time with targeted guidance, demonstrations, or scaffolds. • Refer to the Student Work indicator considerations for examples of writing in a visual arts activity and/or assessment.

Instruction Rubric

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Considerations
Standards and Objectives	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • Clear communication of the daily sub-objective and expectations to the students. • Student mastery of the daily sub-objective, demonstrated through visual responses, verbal responses, or written work.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • A standard could be broken up into daily sub-objectives that lead towards the progress of mastery of the targeted standard. • Due to scheduling, objectives and sub-objectives may be taught over a period of several class sessions. • Much of the work in the visual art classroom is individualized, allowing students to make choices in media, process, and conceptual approach. As a result, student outcomes may vary in appearance, complexity, and skill level while still demonstrating mastery of the lesson objective and alignment to the intended standard.
Motivating Students	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • Students' establishing personal connection to the content through self-selection of concepts and media. • Students exhibit inquiry, curiosity, improvisation, experimentation, and/or exploration. • Teacher reinforcement of student effort, which may include specific verbal or written feedback, questioning, praise, or repetition of student responses.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • Focus, participation, resilience, and attitude of students are clear indicators of student motivation. • Educators should be rewarding effort, growth, and agency. • Students' personal connection to the content is supported as the teacher helps them see the relevance of visual art concepts, encouraging them to move beyond simple observation and make meaningful connections while also allowing them to self-select concepts and media that reflect their own interests and experiences.

Presenting Instructional Content	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • Content presentation that includes exemplar images or demonstrations of conceptual or skill processes. • Content that is presented in an organized manner, demonstrating scaffolding from basic to complex concepts or deconstructing complex material with intent. • Scripting notes that reflect student learning related to sub-objectives. • Scripting notes that describe how students manage space, tools, and materials. • Scripting notes that describe how modeling is performed by the teacher and/or the students.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • Visuals may include anchor charts, images of work from students, historical, and contemporary artists, video demonstrations, or thinking organizers. • Though the teacher may not always refer to the visuals, there could be evidence that students use the visuals during the lesson or studio time. • A visual arts educator may model thinking by demonstrating the use of materials and techniques, revising artwork, explaining processes for generating and refining ideas, and modeling how to give, receive, and respond to feedback.
Lesson Structure and Pacing	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • Student and teacher awareness of the time needed for transitions throughout the lesson. • Opportunities for students to self-reflect on their learning and progression toward mastery of a skill, lesson objective, or standard. • Allocated time for student practice and responses to instruction. • A balance of dialogue where the educator does not control of the conversation the entire time, allowing for student-led discussion. • Students' ability to gather needed materials for class efficiently.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • Student self-reflection may be intertwined throughout the lesson in conversation and not just in an exit ticket or at the end of the lesson. • Reflection might be found in the form of group discussion, individual written journals, responses to growth portfolio, individual student choice during independent work time, or visual responses to educator questions. • Evaluators should keep in mind that students will have different experiences and skill levels and may progress at different learning rates.

Activities and Materials	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • Activities and materials used in the lesson that create opportunities for student-to-student engagement. • Activities that are aligned with the rigor of the standard. • Evidence of student-owned learning and curiosity. • Incorporation of student experiences, interests, and real-life situations into lessons and activities. • Students being challenged in their thinking and encouraged to engage in self-reflection. • Use of technology resources within district guidelines to support or enhance student learning.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • Student-to-student interaction may occur through whole group or small group discussion, or through activities requiring visual, verbal or written responses. • Challenging materials may be responsive to learning levels of individual students or groups of students. • The observer should recognize that students' artistic skill levels vary within any grade and note that activities and materials should align to the course level while still supporting student individual artistic development. • Artistic text may incorporate various formats. • Refer to the thinking indicator for examples of thinking in a visual arts classroom. • Student work products are not limited to finished pieces. The work product may also be process-oriented evidence of learning. • Even when every student is working toward the same standard and learning goal, student choice can be demonstrated through process, materials, approach, and creative decisions.
---------------------------------	--	--

Questioning	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • Question-and-answer sessions between the teacher and students, as well as between students, to identify the types of questions being used. • Evidence of the teacher providing wait time for students to think about the question. • The types of questions the teacher asks to assess students' understanding of the task. • How the educator asks questions, whether directed to individuals or the entire group, and how those questions are used to determine student understanding. • How students are challenged to cite evidence from artistic text or resources when responding to questions.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • Answers to questions may be provided as the educator examines student work during "studio time". • Answers to questions will often be visually communicated and may also be spoken, written, or presented through other forms of artistic expression. • There may not be a single correct answer to questions, providing opportunities for students to navigate multiple or independent interpretations. • Some questions may not be answered within a lesson, but rather as learning progresses and students are able to engage in further inquiry. • The Enduring Understanding or Essential Question should be the foundation of planning questions in order to help students make connections to the overarching idea and relevance of the learning experience. • Question frequency may vary by lesson within a unit of study.
Academic Feedback	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • Feedback may be provided as a question rather than an evaluative statement • Feedback may encourage multiple options or solutions rather than a single direction • How students give feedback to one another and support each other's skill development. • How consistently students are encouraged to self-monitor, identify needed changes, and make corrections.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • Individual student feedback may be provided during whole group, small group, and individual student work. • Student provided feedback on learning may be in the form of student questions, student critiques, or student self-evaluation of learning. • Feedback may be provided in formats such as visual or demonstration formats (e.g., reference to exemplars, opportunities to compare and contrast, or problem-solving prompts). • Feedback may be provided asynchronously, such as written notes or digital platforms, and revisited or addressed at a later class time or work session.

	• How students react to and adjust based on teacher feedback. • Corrections and adjustments made by the teacher based on feedback provided by students regarding their learning. • Whether feedback is specific and academically focused, or primarily motivational.	
Grouping Students	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • All students have a role in the group, with the teacher, or classmates ensuring that the expectations for each role are met. • Scripting notes that capture the composition of the groups (group arrangements may vary) and how the teacher ensures students are successful in their group. • How students engage with one another during the lesson to meet the objectives or sub-objectives. • How students are grouped for the lesson and whether the group composition provides the necessary support for meeting the objectives or sub-objectives.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • Discussion of the group arrangement should occur in a conference with the teacher to ensure the groups are intentional. • Much of the work in the visual art classroom is individualized, even in a small group arrangement, allowing students to make choices in media, process, and conceptual approach. As a result, student outcomes may vary in appearance, complexity, and skill level while still demonstrating mastery of the lesson objective and alignment to the intended standard. • Students within a group may contribute in varied ways based on their individual skill levels, artistic strengths, prior experience, and creative approaches. • Effective group work may be demonstrated through shared planning, idea development, peer support, and collective problem solving, even when student contributions or finished components differ in complexity or technique.

Teacher Content Knowledge	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • How the teacher exhibits accurate knowledge of artistic processes, concepts, skills, and safe use of materials. • The various instructional strategies and resources the teacher uses during the lesson. • How the teacher and students make connections to past learning, previously introduced concepts, and/or future learning.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • Evaluators may request that the educator provide an overview of terms and how they are used within the context of the lesson. • Various teaching strategies used during the lesson should be discussed during the pre-or post-conference. • Refer to the Visual Art Glossary to clarify meanings of key terms so that the intent of each standard is more easily understood by both educators and administrators.
Teacher Knowledge of Students	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • How the teacher exhibits knowledge of students by incorporating teaching techniques that address learning needs (e.g., strategic student placement, student interests, and cultural heritage). • Use of scaffolding or supports for students who may have difficulty completing elements of the lesson. • Differentiation of instruction, content, resources, and student work to meet the various learning levels of the students.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • Teacher knowledge of students may be reflected in the evidence of differentiation strategies that address students' artistic skill levels, creative interests, preferred processes or materials, and the degree of choice and independence they have in demonstrating learning.
Thinking	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • How frequently the teacher provides opportunities for students to think during the lesson. • The types of thinking the teacher models for students and how effectively students are given experiences to apply those thinking	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • Analytical thinking in visual art may be evident when students critique work and provide a rationale, break down artistic processes, evaluate the impact of applications of techniques or concepts, or recognize meaning in art. • Practical thinking in visual art may be evident in how students make decisions based on material or resource availability to develop a

	types through discussion, creation, exhibitions, or presentations. • How the teacher monitors students' thinking to ensure they understand what they are learning and are aware of the thinking strategies they are using and why. • Opportunities provided for students to apply their thinking and successfully assess their progress and areas for improvement.	plan and apply learning for an exhibition, a portfolio, or a project. • Creative thinking in visual art may be evident when students explore materials; take conceptual risks; apply strategies for idea generation (e.g., brainstorming, concept sketches); integrate media, artforms, historical influences, or experiences; or revise existing artwork. • Research-Based thinking in visual art may be evident when students investigate historic and contemporary use of materials and themes in artwork or make observations about the natural and constructed world. Observations may be expressed visually, verbally, or in written form. • Students may communicate mastery of content at a higher level through art production than verbal responses.
--	--	---

Problem Solving	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • How the teacher provides students with opportunities to engage in problem solving during lesson activities. • The types of problem-solving students are engaged in throughout the lesson or activities.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: Students could show evidence of problem solving through: • Abstraction in visual art may be evident when students identify essential qualities of a subject, conceptual representations, or ideas and decide what details to simplify, emphasize, distort, or remove to communicate meaning. Students could respond to or develop generative questions or visually encode concepts (e.g., simplify a realistic object into basic shapes, colors, or lines; integrate visual metaphor or juxtaposition). • Categorization in visual art classes may be evident when students classify artworks, materials, or techniques into groups based on shared characteristics, sequence steps in a process, infer connections between existing works of art and cite evidence, or plan and create art based on a theme. • Drawing conclusions/justifying solutions in a visual art class may be evident when students explain artistic choices using evidence and reasoning. • Predicting outcomes in a visual art class may be evident when students infer the result of a process (e.g., what will happen if complementary colors are blended, if watercolor is layered heavily, or behavior of clay structures during firing), envision multiple outcomes, or evaluate how visual representation and context communicate meaning. • Observing and experimenting in a visual art class may be evident when students test materials, techniques, and processes (e.g., students experiment with different brush techniques, printmaking tools, or mixed media combinations), consider how audience
------------------------	--	--

		perspectives could influence artistic choice (e.g., students engage in systematic observation of artworks, visuals, materials, and/or historic references and apply understanding through experimentation with selecting symbols, colors, etc.), or evaluate the potential impacts of modifying a work (e.g., determining when a work of art is complete). • Improving solutions in a visual art class may be evident when students revise artwork based on reflection, critique, or trial and error, generate alternative approaches, or participate in the design thinking process. • Identifying relevant/irrelevant information in a visual art class may be evident when students differentiate which elements strengthen or detract from the intended message of an artwork, when students make decisions in an artistic process, or when studying the artistic contributions of practicing artists. • Generating Ideas in a visual art class may require students to develop ideas individually or collaboratively, sketch, plan, or create a concept map. • Creating and designing in a visual art class may require students to use various methods of artistic production or engage in the design thinking process.
--	--	---

Environment Rubric

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Considerations
Expectations	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • How the teacher communicates expectations for student work, including thinking and problem solving aligned to the standard. • Students answering questions without fear of making mistakes. • The presence of specific academic feedback from the teacher when students' answers are incorrect. • Student work and activities that are differentiated based on students' readiness levels. • The educator models expectations for completing student work with students demonstrating success in meeting those expectations.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • Academic and behavioral expectations will appear differently based on the expectations of the specific skills being taught. For example, the expectations and time dedicated during instruction for a "Create" standard may look different than the expectations and time dedicated during instruction for a "Respond" standard. • The teacher may actively encourage students to work with "errors" or even incorporate "mistakes" in order to emphasize the non-determinate nature of the creative process. • In a single class, students may be working on standards at different skill levels. • Students demonstrate understanding of classroom roles, routines, and learning goals by actively engaging in tasks, smoothly transitioning between activities, and interacting purposefully with the teacher, peers, and their artwork to support their learning goals. • Students show evidence of defined roles and responsibilities by working independently and collectively with purpose, fulfilling their expectations, within any grouping arrangement, to support the overall process.
Managing Student Behaviors	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • How the teacher responds to disruptions in the classroom. • Established class procedures for learning and behavior. • Evidence of a behavioral plan and how it differs based on class,	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • A class behavior plan may not be posted as a set of rules but instead is observed through teacher and students, or student to student interactions. • Behavioral procedures might be observed in the ways the educator quiets the room after class discussion or the ways the educator

	student, and/or classroom environment. • Strategies the educator uses to maintain appropriate behavior. • How inappropriate behavior is addressed and whether instruction is interrupted as a result.	commands attention when transitioning between learning activities. • Evidence of behavioral plans may not be apparent during classroom observation, but instead evidence can be collected during discussions with the educator during pre-conference or a discussion before the post-conference.
Environment	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • How the classroom is physically set up. • Student knowledge of how to access the materials needed to complete their work. • Students have access to view their own completed work as well as the work of other students. • Availability of space for students to work both individually and in groups. • Seek evidence of a plan and standards-grounded rationale for where and when student work is displayed.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • Displayed student work may include displays of in-progress or completed work. • Displayed student work may include evidence of student recognition or achievement. • Student work may be displayed outside of the classroom, in the community, or in digital environments. • The standards-grounded rationale for displaying student work may include a process for selecting student work to display, collaborating with other educators or community organizations to display work, or consideration of digital platforms. • Visual arts classrooms may have unique layouts and workspaces such as worktables rather than desks, a variety of accessible supplies and materials, furnishings and visuals for multiple grade levels and several classes, and specialty equipment. • Some visual arts classrooms may vary in available space, materials, and instructional setups due to factors such as room assignments, funding levels, or the need for teachers to travel to different classrooms or schools. • The classroom layout should show evidence of the educator utilizing space and materials available to support learning. The educator should work to create a barrier-free

		environment for all learners (e.g., age-appropriate and accessible work areas arranged to allow for safe and efficient movement); and ensure available artmaking materials are in a condition and quantity that support learning. • Work will often be stored for continuation at another time.
Respectful Culture	Observers should seek evidence of the following: • The respectful rapport between the teacher and students as they ask questions and respond to one another. • The educator values student suggestions, choices in their work, or opinions within the academic context. • The tone and word choice used by both the educator and students when providing feedback.	Possible considerations for evidence collection include: • The educator values and supports student choices. These may include choice of media, scale of work, and style. It may also include choices of subject matter or concepts. • The educator moderates class discussions to welcome diverse perspectives and cultivate a whole-class understanding.

Observer Considerations: Preparing for the Post-Conference

In all classrooms, including visual art, observers should analyze student work as part of evaluating instructional effectiveness. However, "student work" in a visual art classroom can look different depending on the type of classroom and the focus of the lesson, whether students are creating, presenting, responding, or connecting. Student work in visual art classrooms may share some elements with general education settings, but it should primarily reflect the Fine Arts Standards. These standards emphasize artistic literacy, including skills, language, critical and creative thinking, and cultural and historical understanding essential to functioning as a visual artist. Regardless of its form, student work should align with these standards and the instructional goals of the lesson.

The post-conference is an opportunity for the educator to reflect on how the outcomes from the lesson aligned with the instructional goals.

More detailed support for post-conferences including example questions, identifying reinforcement and refinement areas, and follow-up plans may be found in the [Teacher Evaluation Handbook](#). With additional questions, please contact TEAM.Questions@tn.gov.