



# Activating Arts Learning: Youth Outcomes

# Introduction to Youth Outcomes

## Youth Outcomes

Youth Outcomes are the changes in young people’s perceptions, beliefs, understandings, and skills that can result from sustained participation in arts learning. We say arts learning is transformative because we believe it can help young people unlock the power within themselves and change the world around them. While we recognize the arts can facilitate many different types of learning, the theory of change spotlights nine outcomes that our staff and advisors identified as most significant to AEC’s mission, vision, values, and programs. The outcomes are grouped according to the three broad areas highlighted in AEC’s vision: transforming young people’s sense of self, their ability to communicate thoughts and feelings, and their capacity to shape communities.

## Selected Relationships to Other Frameworks

AEC staff compared the theory of change’s list of understandings, skills, perceptions, and beliefs supported by arts learning against well-known sets of standards and competencies to look for points of alignment. References to four frameworks are included here: National Core Arts Standards, Pennsylvania Career Ready Skills Continuum, Social Emotional Learning Competencies, and Social Justice Standards. Only connections with top-level anchor standards and competencies are noted. There are often further connections with age-specific or grade-specific outcomes listed at

more detailed levels of the frameworks. Please see our [Activating Arts Learning Resources](#) document for research related to each youth outcome.

## Supporting Elements of Instruction

AEC staff and Advisory Board members, arts educators and teaching artists, school administrators and teachers, and arts organization leaders who contributed to the theory of change examined relationships between its components. For each Youth Outcome, they were asked to identify the Elements of Instruction that are most important for supporting growth in that area among young people in arts learning experiences. The most frequently mentioned Elements of Instruction are listed here for each Youth Outcome.



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# Sense of Self:

## *Self-awareness and feelings of self-efficacy*

**Description:** Self-awareness and feelings of self-efficacy are perceptions and understandings of one’s own thoughts and feelings, needs, interests, preferences, and abilities—particularly recognizing personal strengths and developing a positive self-image. Arts learning provides opportunities for introspection, encouraging young people to explore and shape their understandings of who they are and what they can do.

Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to: recognize one’s own feelings and interests</li> <li>• Awareness of: one’s own abilities and accomplishments, one’s own needs and preferences, opportunities for growth</li> <li>• Feeling: confidence in what one knows and can do, confidence to be oneself, positive about oneself, pride, self-authorization, self-confidence, self-love</li> <li>• Valuing: one’s own experiences and skills, one’s own story and voice</li> </ul>
Selected relationships to other frameworks	<p><a href="#">National Core Arts Standards</a></p> <p>10. Connecting - Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art</p> <p><a href="#">Pennsylvania Career Ready Skills Continuum</a></p> <p>A. Self-Awareness and Self-Management - Demonstrate awareness of self and one’s own preferences</p> <p>A. Self-Awareness and Self-Management - Identify one’s own strengths, needs, and preferences</p> <p>A. Self-Awareness and Self-Management - Explain to others one’s own strengths, needs, and preferences specific to a context</p> <p><a href="#">Social Emotional Learning Competencie</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-awareness: The abilities to understand one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Social Justice Standards</a></p> <p>3. Identity - Students will recognize that people’s multiple identities interact and create unique and complex individuals</p> <p>4. Identity - Students will express pride, confidence, and healthy self-esteem without denying the value and dignity of other people</p>

## Sense of Self:

### *Self-awareness and feelings of self-efficacy (cont.)*

Supporting Elements of Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-assessment and reflection</li><li>• Focusing on young people's assets and strengths</li><li>• Choice and creative expression</li><li>• Cultural relevance</li><li>• Treating young people with care and respect</li></ul>
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# Sense of Self:

## *Understanding of culture and heritage*

**Description:** Understanding of culture and heritage is insight into the peoples of the world both past and present, especially the communities and legacies that are part of one's own personal history. Taking life as its subject, art reflects core cultural understandings, values, and beliefs about what it means to be human. Arts learning allows young people to travel across time and place to encounter diverse thoughts and perspectives about life's essential questions, which provides a touchstone for understanding their own backgrounds as well as those of others.

Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Awareness of: the relationship between art and everyday life and popular culture, traditional art forms and handicrafts</li><li>• Feeling: connection with experiences across time and place, connection with prior generations, curiosity about history, belonging and pride in one's racial or ethnic identity</li><li>• Understanding of: one's own cultural heritage, one's own family history and cultural background, oneself in the context of history, the role art has played in the African Diaspora</li></ul>
Selected relationships to other frameworks	<p>National Core Arts Standards</p> <p>11. Connecting - Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, historical context to deepen understanding</p> <p>Social Justice Standards</p> <p>2. Identity - Students will develop language and historical and cultural knowledge that affirm and accurately describe their membership in multiple identity groups</p> <p>5. Identity - Students will recognize traits of the dominant culture, their home culture, and other cultures and understand how they negotiate their own identity in multiple spaces</p> <p>8. Diversity - Students will respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and will exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way</p> <p>10. Diversity - Students will examine diversity in social, cultural, political, and historical contexts rather than in ways that are superficial or oversimplified</p>

## Sense of Self:

### *Understanding of culture and heritage (cont.)*

Supporting Elements of Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cultural relevance</li><li>• Real-world connections</li><li>• Treating young people with care and respect</li><li>• Collaboration and sharing</li><li>• Access to authentic artistic resources and tools</li></ul>
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# Sense of Self:

## *Motivation to Learn*

**Description:** Motivation to learn is a personal interest and engagement in one’s own learning. Sustained involvement in the arts can help instill a sense of purpose in young people and foster positive connections with school and other educational settings. For many students who struggle in more traditional academic environments and coursework, participation in the arts may offer a unique chance to experience success, receive recognition for their talents and accomplishments, and expand their vision of what’s possible in their futures.

Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believing: learning is interesting and challenging</li> <li>• Feeling: a love for learning, a sense of ownership and being in charge of one’s own learning, empowered to learn, engaged and interested in learning, motivated to learn more, recognized for academic achievement in ways that take into account non-traditional measures and what one has overcome</li> <li>• Participating in: life-long learning</li> <li>• Valuing: learning</li> </ul>
Supporting Elements of Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choice and creative expression</li> <li>• Treating young people with care and respect</li> <li>• Focusing on young people’s strengths and assets</li> <li>• Cultural relevance</li> <li>• Clear and challenging expectations</li> </ul>

# Ability to Communicate Thoughts and Feelings

## *Artistic understanding and skills*

**Description:** Artistic understandings and skills are the discipline-specific knowledge and abilities used to create, perform, present, produce, respond to, and connect with works of art. As their technical skills increase, young people can exert greater control over their artistic choices and more powerfully communicate their thoughts and feelings through the mediums of dance, media arts, music, theatre, or visual arts. These understandings and skills are intrinsically valuable, whether young people choose to pursue a career in the arts or engage with the arts as creators, performers, or consumers for their own personal enjoyment.

Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to: decode and interpret symbols, find personal meaning in art, identify ideas and feelings communicated through works of art, see oneself represented in works of art, speculate and draw conclusions about meaning</li> <li>• Awareness of: how there are many ways to interpret the world</li> <li>• Show: mastery of technical skill</li> </ul>
Selected relationships to other frameworks	<p>National Core Arts Standards</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creating - Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work</li> <li>2. Creating - Organize and develop artistic ideas and work</li> <li>3. Creating - Organize and develop artistic ideas and work</li> <li>4. Performing / Presenting / Producing - Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation</li> <li>5. Performing / Presenting / Producing - Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation</li> <li>6. Performing / Presenting / Producing - Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work</li> <li>7. Responding - Perceive and analyze artistic work</li> <li>8. Responding - Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work</li> <li>9. Responding - Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work</li> <li>10. Connecting - Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art</li> <li>11. Connecting - Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, historical context to deepen understanding</li> </ol>
Supporting Elements of Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to authentic artistic resources and tools</li> <li>• Choice and creative expression</li> <li>• Self-assessment and reflection</li> <li>• Emphasizing process over product</li> </ul>

# Ability to Communicate Thoughts and Feelings

## *Relationship building skills*

**Description:** Relationship building skills include a range of social and interpersonal skills that help one build positive personal connections with others both one-on-one and in group settings. Arts learning environments in which young people work collaboratively in pairs, small groups, or larger teams can promote deeper levels of understanding, respect, and empathy for others.

Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to: apply strategies to build trust with others, communicate in ways that demonstrate respect for the feelings of self and others, demonstrate empathy, prevent interpersonal conflict but manage and resolve it when it occurs, react with kindness to the feelings of peers and adults, use cooperation and consensus building skills</li> <li>• Awareness of: the interconnectedness of their lives with others</li> <li>• Feeling a: close connection to peers and adults, sense of being supported, sense of belonging or being part of a “family” of one’s choosing, sense of compassion and empathy</li> <li>• Respect for: diverse viewpoints</li> <li>• Valuing: collaboration as a way to improve practice</li> </ul>
Selected relationships to other frameworks	<p>Pennsylvania Career Ready Skills Continuum</p> <p>A. Social Problem-Solving Skills - Recognize and respond to the feelings of others</p> <p>A. Social Problem-Solving Skills - Respond to others given a sense of the others’ point of view</p> <p>B. Establishing and Maintaining Relationships - Interact in pro-social ways (e.g., reciprocal conversation, turn taking, sharing) with peers and adults</p> <p>B. Establishing and Maintaining Relationships - Explain ways to establish relationships that are positive and supportive of others</p> <p>B. Establishing and Maintaining Relationships - Explain how empathy and perspective taking foster relationship building</p> <p>B. Establishing and Maintaining Relationships - Establish pro-social relationships to support self and others</p>

# Ability to Communicate Thoughts and Feelings

## *Relationship building skills (cont.)*

<p>Selected relationships to other frameworks (cont.)</p>	<p>B. Establishing and Maintaining Relationships - Identify similarities and differences between self and others            B. Establishing and Maintaining Relationships - Demonstrate respect for the uniqueness of others            B. Establishing and Maintaining Relationships - Interact with others demonstrating respect, cooperation, and acceptance            C. Social Problem-Solving Skills - Recognize and respond to the feelings of others            C. Social Problem-Solving Skills - Respond to others given a sense of the others' point of view</p> <p>Social Emotional Learning Competencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship skills: The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups</li> <li>• Social awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts</li> </ul> <p>Social Justice Standards</p> <p>6. Diversity - Students will express comfort with people who are both similar to and different from them and engage respectfully with all people</p> <p>7. Diversity - Students will develop language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including themselves) are both similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups</p> <p>9. Diversity - Students will respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection</p> <p>11. Justice - Students will recognize stereotypes and relate to people as individuals rather than representatives of groups</p> <p>16. Action - Students will express empathy when people are excluded or mistreated because of their identities and concern when they themselves experience bias</p>
<p>Supporting Elements of Instruction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration and sharing</li> <li>• Treating young people with care and respect</li> <li>• Cultural relevance</li> </ul>

# Self-expression

**Description:** Self-expression is the ability to give voice to one’s identity by sharing personal stories, feelings, ideas, and experiences in a powerful, meaningful way. As young people become more technically proficient in the performing and visual arts, they can draw upon a growing range of expressive tools to help them make sense of their innermost thoughts and feelings and communicate them to others. .

<p>Examples</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to: describe one’s emotions, identify and express feelings in multiple ways, manage and express emotions in relationships, use symbols to make art</li> <li>• Awareness of: alternate ways to express emotions, how learning an art form can give voice to thoughts and feelings</li> <li>• Understanding of: different styles and modes of expression and their impact on others, how others are impacted when communicating an emotional message, storytelling modes and structures available through different techniques and art forms, the power of art to express emotions</li> <li>• Willingness to: express personal ideas and feelings openly</li> </ul>
<p>Selected relationships to other frameworks</p>	<p>National Core Arts Standards</p> <p>6. Performing / Presenting / Producing - Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work</p> <p>10. Connecting - Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art</p> <p>Pennsylvania Career Ready Skills Continuum</p> <p>A. Self-Awareness and Self-Management - Identify different ways of expressing a feeling</p> <p>B. Establishing and Maintaining Relationships - Select and utilize expressive communication strategies (e.g., tone, body language, facial expressions) with an understanding of its effect on others</p> <p>B. Establishing and Maintaining Relationships - Explain how expressive communication strategies can affect others</p> <p>B. Establishing and Maintaining Relationships - Select expressive communication strategies specific to context</p>

# Ability to Communicate Thoughts and Feelings

## *Self-expression (cont.)*

Supporting Elements of Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choice and creative expression</li><li>• Experimentation and risk taking</li><li>• Self-assessment and reflection</li><li>• Focusing on young people's assets and strengths</li><li>• Open-ended inquiry</li></ul>
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# Capacity to Shape Communities

## *Creative entrepreneurship and career pathways*

**Description:** Creative entrepreneurship and career pathways are knowledge, skills, resources, and relationships that enable one to pursue a profession and support oneself financially. The arts offer opportunities for employment in a variety of occupations and settings—in the public eye or behind-the-scenes. Young people may eventually choose to seek out employment to contribute their talents to an established organization or strike out and start their own business.

Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to: establish and pursue goals for employment, identify preliminary short- and long-term goals related to individual and career interests</li> <li>• Participation in: establishing one’s own business</li> <li>• Understanding of: entrepreneurship concepts and strategies, personal strengths and how they relate to career pathways</li> <li>• Willingness to: pursue creative careers and careers in the arts</li> </ul>
Selected relationships to other frameworks	<p>Pennsylvania Career Ready Skills Continuum</p> <p>A. Self-Awareness and Self-Management - Distinguish among and set short-term, mid-range, and long-term goals</p> <p>A. Self-Awareness and Self-Management - Identify and evaluate distractors that impact reaching ones’ goals</p> <p>A. Self-Awareness and Self-Management - Establish and pursue goals for postsecondary education, employment, and living within the community</p>
Supporting Elements of Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real-world connections</li> <li>• Access to authentic artistic resources and tools</li> <li>• Focusing on young people’s assets and strengths</li> <li>• Clear and challenging expectation</li> </ul>

# Capacity to Shape Communities

## *Problem solving skills*

**Description:** Problem-solving skills are tools for perceiving and interpreting the world in ways that allow one to respond successfully to complex challenges. Intensive arts learning experiences can help young people develop a wide range of habits of mind and skill sets that aid problem solving, including the ability to sustain focus, observe closely, manipulate and synthesize information, engage in abstract and spatial reasoning, and make qualitative judgments.

Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to: connect observations to previous knowledge, identify problems when making decisions and generate alternatives, look closely and notice details, make connections within and between disciplines, observe and look closely, question and investigate, think about how to improve their work based on self-assessment</li> <li>• Feeling: comfortable with ambiguity and complexity</li> </ul>
Selected relationships to other frameworks	<p>National Core Arts Standards</p> <p>7. Responding - Perceive and analyze artistic work</p> <p>8. Responding - Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work</p> <p>9. Responding - Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work</p> <p>Pennsylvania Career Ready Skills Continuum</p> <p>C. Social Problem-Solving Skills - Analyze various perspectives on a situation</p>
Supporting Elements of Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open-ended inquiry</li> <li>• Experimentation and risk taking</li> <li>• Clear and challenging expectations</li> <li>• Self-assessment and reflection</li> <li>• Emphasizing process over product</li> </ul>

# Civic Engagement

**Description:** Civic engagement is acting to create a just and supportive community. Arts learning that engages young people in important social issues can promote a sense of personal responsibility to the community and empower them to work toward changes that will have a positive impact on their lives.

Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ability to: visualize a better future for oneself</li><li>• Awareness of: connections between one's own life and others' lives, how art can be used bring attention to social issues and be part of creating a better future</li><li>• Feeling: a sense of personal empowerment and ability to make a difference, a sense of personal responsibility to and connection with community, a sense that change is possible, confident advocating for issues that affect youth</li><li>• Participation by: celebrating and elevating one's school or neighborhood, choosing to stay in one's neighborhood and being an active part of and strengthening local organizations, volunteering</li><li>• Understanding of: how the communities that one is a part of can be resources, one's civic responsibilities (such as participating in democratic processes and helping those in need), the need for advocacy and ways to make one's voice heard</li><li>• Valuing: community assets and strengths</li></ul>
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## Civic Engagement (cont.)

<p>Selected relationships to other frameworks</p>	<p>National Core Arts Standards</p> <p>11. Connecting - Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, historical context to deepen understanding</p> <p>Pennsylvania Career Ready Skills Continuum</p> <p>C. Social Problem-Solving Skills - Evaluate consequences from a personal and civic perspective to inform decision making</p> <p>Social Justice Standards</p> <p>17. Action - Students will recognize their own responsibility to stand up to exclusion, prejudice, and injustice</p> <p>20. Action - Students will plan and carry out collective action against bias and injustice in the world and will evaluate what strategies are most effective</p>
<p>Supporting Elements of Instruction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real-world connections</li> <li>• Cultural relevance</li> <li>• Collaboration and sharing</li> <li>• Treating young people with care and respect</li> </ul>