PLAYBOOK FOR PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT: HIGH SCHOOL

by Dr. Susan Lane

At the high school level, the portfolio could serve as part of completing a four-year program, a graduation requirement, a submission for a scholarship, or an application to a college or university. Students usually build their portfolio throughout the high school experience but focus on curation during their junior or senior year, depending on its purpose. If a student is preparing a portfolio for a professional organization, scholarship, or college application, it is essential to read the specific requirements (Gale, n. d.). Do not assume the expectations will be the same for every organization or consistent from year to year (Lieu, 2020).

Depending on the purpose, the portfolio can be digital or physical and should be curated by the student with support from the teacher or professional artists. If it is digital, the work should be uploaded to the platforms indicated by the organization accepting the work. If no specific platform is suggested, consider a platform that can be easily accessed after the student graduates. Some examples are Behance, Journo Portfolio, or Weebly (Digital Arts Staff, 2020). Students can also use Google Sites, Google Slides, or PowerPoint, but once they graduate, they may need to save a copy of their portfolio to a personal account to access it outside the school district.

If the portfolio is physical, the work should be stored in an artist’s portfolio case, which can be found at brick and mortar art stores or online retailers like Amazon, Blick Art Materials, Cheap Joe’s Art Stuff, Jerry’s Artarama, and others.

Along with the artwork, portfolios include an artist statement, reflections, and a demonstration of knowledge that could be provided in writing, audio, video, or a combination, depending on the guidelines. Some organizations want to see only finished artwork, but others welcome development work like sketchbooks (Lieu, 2020). Becoming familiar with the specific requirements of the organization is essential.

ARTWORK

The quantity of artwork in a high school portfolio will vary depending on its purpose and the organization’s requirements. For instance, some organizations require 10-12 pieces, while others require fewer (Sarikas, 2015).

The AP College Board (2020a) asks students to submit 20 works total with 15 digital images reflecting sustained investigation, including details or process images and five selected works.

The National Portfolio Day Association (NPDA) holds events across the United States, Canada, and Europe, where high school and college students can present their art portfolios for professional adjudication and feedback. The association recommends portfolios contain 10-15 pieces of work.

The New York State Art Teachers Association Portfolio Project asks students at the commencement level to include six artworks, including a self-portrait, a resource-based artwork and reflection, art from observation, a process piece, and two student choice artworks (New York State Art Teachers Association, 2011).
If choosing to use a portfolio for assessment at the district level, the number of works and content is up to the teacher. Kathy Pilling-Whitney (2010) initiated a portfolio assessment for studio art students. In that portfolio, students were required to submit seven works of art that were created during the school year.

**ARTISTS STATEMENTS AND REFLECTIONS**

Reflections usually follow or accompany artwork and clarify the understanding of processes, skills, and knowledge (Christenson, 2016). Like artwork, artist statements and reflections can be digital or physical.

The AP College Board (2020b) asks AP Studio Art students to write a 500-character-maximum statement that explains the central idea of their sustained investigation, including factual information about the materials, processes, and personal connection.

During The National Portfolio Day Association events, formal written artist statements or written responses are not required, but students are expected to talk about how their ideas were developed, the processes they used, and their artistic goals.

The NYSATA Portfolio Project (2011, p. 2) asks students at the commencement level to include an artist statement in response to five questions:

1. Tell us about yourself as an artist. Why is creating artwork important to you?
2. How do the pieces selected for inclusion in your portfolio represent you as an artist?
3. What influences your decisions about the materials and techniques you choose to work with?
4. What inspires you, and where do your ideas come from when you create artwork?
5. What role will artmaking play in your life as you continue with your high school studies?

In addition, students are asked to write a reflection that accompanies a resource-based artwork, including (NYSATA, 2011, p. 4):

1. Why is it important for artists to study other artists, time periods, cultures, or how important themes can be used for the basis of making art?
2. What is the cultural, historical, artistic reference, important theme, or big idea you explored?
3. What are the most important things that you learned about the non-western culture, time period, artist, theme, or big idea you researched?
4. How does your artwork reflect the non-western culture, time period, artist, theme, or big idea you studied? Write down two or three of the specific ways in which your artwork shares some characteristics of the artwork you studied when doing your research.
5. How is your work different from the non-Western culture, time period, artist, or art that was also about the same big idea that you studied? Include information regarding some of the choices you made to change or adapt your ideas, the style, the techniques, and/or the mediums used that makes your work different from your references.
6. Bibliography: Please attach or include a bibliography of your references with your essay.
DEMONSTRATION OF KNOWLEDGE

A student’s completed artwork cannot always tell the complete story of what they know, so many portfolio assessments at the high school level ask students to share their knowledge of art and the artmaking process in writing to accompany the artwork (AP College Board, 2020b; NYSATA, 2011).

If you plan on using a portfolio as an end-of-course or end-of-sequence assessment, asking students to respond to specific prompts for each artwork or in a general artist statement is appropriate. Pilling-Whitney (2010, pp. 56-58) provided prompts to guide students through the process of demonstrating knowledge in artist statements accompanying their projects. Some of the prompts she used included:

1. Check the elements and principles of art and design in the project and briefly describe how they were emphasized.
2. Describe how well you used the elements and principles.
3. Name the cultural style or style in art used in this project.
4. Describe the style of the artist, culture, or historical influences used for this project.
5. State the qualities of the style that contributed meaning to the project.
6. State the qualities of the style that helped shape artistic communication.
7. State how styles like this shape diverse cultures of the past and present society.
8. How did this project increase your understanding of art?
HIGH SCHOOL PORTFOLIO SUGGESTIONS

Portfolio
• Driven by state or national standards, learning goals of the curriculum, or the organization requesting the portfolio
• Format: digital, physical, or a combination
  - If submitted to a professional organization or college, check the website for specific requirements.
    • Look at examples of portfolios.
  - Digital portfolios should be accessible outside the school district and beyond graduation.
    • Photographs of artwork should be high quality.
  - Physical portfolios should be easily transported without being damaged.
    • They should contain clean, neat, and professionally presented artwork.
• Curated over a year or the span of the middle school years
  - Look at examples of previously submitted art portfolios.

Artwork
• Collect a range of work that shows multiple skill sets.
• Include original work and works created from direct observation.
• Present the artwork in a professional, clear, and clean manner.

Reflections
• In response to the prompts or questions provided by the organization requesting the portfolio
• Well written with correct grammar, punctuation, spelling and usage

Artist Statements
• In response to prompts or questions provided by the organization requesting the portfolio
• Well written with correct grammar, punctuation, spelling and usage

Demonstration of Knowledge
• Usually embedded in responses or artist statements.

EXAMPLE OF A HIGH SCHOOL PORTFOLIO: PROFICIENT LEVEL (STUDIO ART)
The portfolio below consists of:
• Six artworks
• Artifacts from practice and experimentation as well as reflections
• Knowledge expressed through reflections, artist statements, or conversations
• National Core Arts Standards for the commencement level

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

Students moving on to more art classes to complete a sequence will save this portfolio for later use.
EXAMPLE OF A HIGH SCHOOL PORTFOLIO – PROFICIENT LEVEL (STUDIO ART)

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Curation of Portfolio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATED STANDARDS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Core Arts Standards <a href="https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/">https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA:Pr4.1.HSI Analyze, select, and curate artifacts and/or artworks for presentation and preservation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>VA:Pr5.1.HSI Analyze and evaluate the reasons and ways an exhibition is presented.</td>
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<tr>
<td>VA:Pr6.1.HSI Analyze and describe the impact that an exhibition or collection has on personal awareness of social, cultural, or political beliefs and understandings.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVIDENCE FOR PORTFOLIO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The type of portfolio is at the discretion of the teacher. It could be physical or digital. Digital portfolios will contain the same information, except all artwork and documents will be stored and shared digitally.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical portfolios could contain 2D artwork, photographs of 3D artwork, and written reflections. Work could be stored and organized in something like a large red wallet portfolio or an artist’s portfolio.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students will curate works for the portfolio to represent growth in knowledge and skill during their year-long Studio Art course.</td>
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<tr>
<td>All work will be clearly labeled and presented in a clean, neat manner. Photographed images should be high quality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artist statements and reflections will be typed and stored in the portfolio.</td>
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<tr>
<td>REFLECTIONS</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Explain how this artwork addressed the enduring idea or theme.</td>
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<td>2. What inspired you to create the artwork, or where did your ideas come from?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. What influenced your decisions about the materials and techniques used in the artwork?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Describe how the elements and principles of art and design you chose helped express the idea, concept, or theme of your artwork.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Explain the cultural, historical, political, societal, or personal influences for your artwork.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. How did this project increase your understanding of art and being an artist?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| VA:Re8.1.HSI | Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts. |
| VA:Re9.1.HSI | Establish relevant criteria in order to evaluate a work of art or collection of works. |
| VA:Cn11.1.HSI | Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art. |

| MA:Re7.1.HSI a. | Analyze the qualities of and relationships between the components, style, and preferences communicated by media artworks and artists. |
| MA:Re8.1.HSI a. | Analyze the intent, meanings, and reception of a variety of media artworks, focusing on personal and cultural contexts. |
| MA:Re9.1.HSI a. | Evaluate media art works and production processes at decisive stages, using identified criteria, and considering context and artistic goals. |

1. After the completion of each artwork, reflections will be typed in response to the questions and included in the portfolio along with the associated artwork. 
2. Revisions of earlier reflections may be made before the final portfolio presentation.
ARTIST STATEMENT

Think back on your experiences during Studio Art and review the reflections for each project.

Write a three-paragraph statement addressing these questions:

1. Who are you, why do you create art, and what are your goals and aspirations?

2. In general, what was your thought process while creating art? What motivated your choice of medium, style, and content?

3. How have your prior art and life experiences affected your current work, and what do you plan to explore in the future?

ARTIST STATEMENT RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VA:Re7.1.HSI</td>
<td>Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>VA:Re8.1.HSI</td>
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<tr>
<td>VA:Cn11.1.HSI</td>
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MA:Re9.1.HSI a. Evaluate media art works and production processes at decisive stages, using identified criteria, and considering context and artistic goals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARAGRAPH 1</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The paragraph provides no information about who the student is beyond being a Studio Art student, including their aspirations related to art.</td>
<td>The paragraph provides little information about who the student is beyond being a Studio Art student, including their aspirations related to art.</td>
<td>The paragraph provides some information about who the student is beyond being a Studio Art student, including their aspirations related to art.</td>
<td>The paragraph provides information about who the student is beyond being a Studio Art student, including their aspirations related to art.</td>
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<tr>
<th>PARAGRAPH 2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The thought process used while creating art is not explained, including what motivated the choice(s) of medium, style, and content.</td>
<td>The thought process used while creating art is vaguely explained, including what motivated the choice(s) of medium, style, and content.</td>
<td>The thought process used while creating art is mostly explained, including what motivated the choice(s) of medium, style, and content.</td>
<td>The thought process used while creating art is clearly explained, including what motivated the choice(s) of medium, style, and content.</td>
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<tr>
<th>PARAGRAPH 3</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The effects of prior art and life experiences are not explained and related to current and future artwork.</td>
<td>The effects of prior art and life experiences are minimally explained and related to current and future artwork.</td>
<td>The effects of prior art and life experiences are generally explained and related to current and future artwork.</td>
<td>The effect of prior art and life experiences are clearly explained and related to current and future artwork.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WRITING</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The writing is not clear, concise, focused, or detailed. No proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling are present.</td>
<td>Few aspects of writing are clear, concise, focused, and detailed.</td>
<td>The writing is mostly clear, concise, focused, and detailed. Mostly proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling are present.</td>
<td>The writing is clear, concise, focused, and detailed. Proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling are present.</td>
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ENDURING IDEA: DESIGN

EQ:

1. How do artists use the elements of art with the principles of design to communicate ideas or concepts?
2. What influence does culture have on design preferences?
3. How have past designs influenced contemporary designs?

ARTWORK:

Create three works of art that explore and expand the concept of design inspired by cultural, historical, or contemporary art.

VA:Cr1.1.HSI Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.

VA:Cr3.1.HSI Apply relevant criteria from traditional and contemporary cultural contexts to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for works of art and design in progress.

MA:Cr1.1.1.HSI a. identified generative methods to formulate multiple ideas, develop artistic goals, and problem solve in media arts creation processes.

MA:Cr2.1.1.HSI a. aesthetic criteria in developing, proposing, and refining artistic ideas, plans, prototypes, and production processes for media arts productions, considering original inspirations, goals, and presentation context.

MA:Cr3.1.HSI a. Consolidate production processes to demonstrate deliberate choices in organizing and integrating content and stylistic conventions in media arts productions, demonstrating understanding of associated principles, such as emphasis and tone.

b. Refine and modify media artworks, honing aesthetic quality and intentionally accentuating stylistic elements, to reflect an understanding of personal goals and preferences.

MA:Re7.1.HSI a. Analyze the qualities of and relationships between the components, style, and preferences communicated by media artworks and artists.

1. One or two artworks that illustrate the use of design inspired by cultural, historical, or contemporary art

2. Typed responses to reflection prompts as related to the artwork presented in the portfolio
ENDURING IDEA: IDENTITY

EQs:

1. What determines your identity?
2. How have artists across time expressed their identity?
3. How can self-portraits reveal more than a physical appearance?

ARTWORK: SELF-PORTRAIT

Create an artwork that expresses your unique identity.

VA:Cr1.1.HSI Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.

VA:Cr3.1.HSI Apply relevant criteria from traditional and contemporary cultural contexts to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for works of art and design in progress.

MA:Cr1.1.1.HSI a. identified generative methods to formulate multiple ideas, develop artistic goals, and problem solve in media arts creation processes.

MA:Re8.1.HSI a. Analyze the intent, meanings, and reception of a variety of media artworks, focusing on personal and cultural contexts.

1. Artwork that expresses the student’s unique identity as a visual extension of an artist statement
2. Typed responses to reflection prompts as related to the artwork presented in the portfolio
ENDURING IDEA: PSYCHOLOGICAL COMMUNICATION/MESSAGE

EQs:

1. How do artists use elements and principles to communicate ideas, concepts, or feelings?

2. How do artists influence and persuade through the use of imagery, elements, and principles?

ARTWORK: SELF-PORTRAIT

Create an artwork that expresses a feeling or communicates an idea, concept, message, or persuades the viewer.

VA:Cr.1.HSI Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.

VA:Cn.11.HSI Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.

VA:Cr.3.HSI Apply relevant criteria from traditional and contemporary cultural contexts to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for works of art and design in progress.

MA:Cr.1.HSI a. Identified generative methods to formulate multiple ideas, develop artistic goals, and problem solve in media arts creation processes.

MA:Re.8.HSI a. Analyze the intent, meanings, and reception of a variety of media artworks, focusing on personal and cultural contexts.

MA:Cn.11.HSI a. Demonstrate and explain how media artworks and ideas relate to various contexts, purposes, and values, such as social trends, power, equality, and personal/cultural identity.

b. Critically evaluate and effectively interact with legal, technological, systemic, and vocational contexts of media arts, considering ethics, media literacy, social media, virtual worlds, and digital identity.

1. Artwork that expresses a feeling, communicates an idea, concept, or message, or persuades the viewer

2. Typed responses to reflection prompts as related to the artwork presented in the portfolio
**ENDURING IDEA: OBSERVATION/PERCEPTION**

**EQs:**

1. How do the choices artists made in presenting a subject communicate their observations?
2. How do artists create the illusion of three-dimensions on a two-dimensional plane?

**ARTWORK:** Create an artwork from observation that contains three-dimensional objects and a sense of space.

**VA:**

**VA:Cr1.1.HSI** Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.

**VA:Cr2.1.HSI** Engage in making a work of art or design without having a preconceived plan.

**VA:Cr3.1.HSI**

Apply relevant criteria from traditional and contemporary cultural contexts to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for works of art and design in progress.

1. Create an artwork from observation that contains three-dimensional objects and a sense of space.

2. Typed responses to reflection prompts as related to the artwork presented in the portfolio.
**ENDURING IDEA: CULTURAL AWARENESS**

1. EQs:
   1. What defines a culture?
   2. What are subcultures and countercultures?

**ARTWORK:** Create an artwork that provides a visual narrative about an aspect of your culture.

VA:Cr1.1.HSI Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.

VA:Cr1.2.HSI Shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present-day life using a contemporary practice of art or design.

VA:Cr3.1.HSI Apply relevant criteria from traditional and contemporary cultural contexts to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for works of art and design in progress.

VA:Cn11.1.HSI Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.

MA:Re8.1.HSI a. Analyze the intent, meanings, and reception of a variety of media artworks, focusing on personal and cultural contexts.

MA:Cn10.1.HSI a. Access, evaluate, and integrate personal and external resources to inform the creation of original media artworks, such as experiences, interests, and cultural experiences.

b. Explain and demonstrate the use of media artworks to expand meaning and knowledge and create cultural experiences, such as learning and sharing through online environments.

1. 1. Create an artwork that provides a visual narrative about an aspect of your culture.

2. 2. Typed responses to reflection prompts as related to the artwork presented in the portfolio.
ENDURING IDEA: STUDENT CHOICE AS EXPRESSED THROUGH A PROCESS PIECE

EQs:
1. What is an enduring idea?
2. What caused the shift from traditional to modern art?
3. What are the states in your process from beginning to end?

ARTWORK: Explore an enduring idea or theme by looking at how traditional and contemporary artists explored the idea or theme. Experiment with different media and styles to generate a unique expression of the idea or theme.

Include all process work along with the finished artwork.

Process work could include research, notes, sketches, experiments, failed attempts, and prototypes.

VA:Cr1.1.HSI Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.

VA:Cr3.1.HSI Apply relevant criteria from traditional and contemporary cultural contexts to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for works of art and design in progress.

VA:Cn10.1.HSI Document the process of developing ideas from early stages to fully elaborated ideas.

MA:Cr1.1.1.HSI a. identified generative methods to formulate multiple ideas, develop artistic goals, and problem solve in media arts creation processes.

MA:Cr2.1.1.HSI a. aesthetic criteria in developing, proposing, and refining artistic ideas, plans, prototypes, and production processes for media arts productions, considering original inspirations, goals, and presentation context.

MA:Cr3.1.HSI a. Consolidate production processes to demonstrate deliberate choices in organizing and integrating content and stylistic conventions in media arts productions, demonstrating understanding of associated principles, such as emphasis and tone.

b. Refine and modify media artworks, honing aesthetic quality and intentionally accentuating stylistic elements, to reflect an understanding of personal goals and preferences.

MA:Re9.1.HSI a. Evaluate media art works and production processes at decisive stages, using identified criteria, and considering context and artistic goals.

1. Create an artwork that is a unique expression of the idea or theme chosen.

2. Typed responses to reflection prompts as related to the artwork presented in the portfolio.
REFERENCES


Gale, A. (n. d.). *How to make an art portfolio for college or university (the ultimate guide)*. Student Art Guide. https://www.studentartguide.com/articles/how-to-make-an-art-portfolio-for-college-or-university


