

**Development and Pilot Study of a K-12 School  
Online Arts Education Assessment Tool  
The California Arts Project  
Arts Education Assessment Tool  
TCAP-AEAT**

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**Abstract**

*This work focuses on the development, construction, and first year pilot testing of an online arts education program assessment tool for California K-12 schools and districts. The TCAP-AEAT is a new model of formative and summative arts education assessment, designed to facilitate timely assessment and recommended improvement measures for arts education programs in K-12 public schools. The TCAP-AEAT assessment process seeks to improve outcomes for all students, especially those students in traditionally underserved schools. The areas of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development will be assessed within the guidelines of the current California Visual and Performing Arts Framework and Content Standards. The results of the process will be used to inform ongoing arts education decisions in California schools and districts.*

**BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

**Introduction**

California schools and districts need a streamlined, up to date arts education program assessment tool, that provides timely information from which to build plans and set directions to move ahead in implementing quality arts programs for student benefit. Traditionally, arts education program assessment has been an arduous process, assessing numerous aspects of an arts education program, requiring multiple sessions of school staff participation and often taking a year and a half just to complete the assessment. Once the assessment was complete, district or school factors such as funding, teaching staff, test results, political climate, or parent support, may have changed. These changes, after the year and a half spent assessing, often influenced negatively the status of arts education before the school could even begin to implement changes in the program. Additionally, due to factors such as change of leadership, lack of record keeping at state, district, or school site levels, any data gathered or plans developed were frequently thrown out, misplaced, or simply forgotten. No data

gathering and management exists for California's arts education programs.

The California Department of Education, The California Arts Project, California Legislative Coalition for Arts Education, the California Arts Council, and other entities had implemented several assessment projects in the 1990's to assist in the implementation of quality arts education programs in California public schools. These programs involved multiple school and district staff members for assessments that took a year to a year and a half to administer. After a year and half of assessment, the school was finally ready to begin actual implementation of recommendations for school arts education program improvement.

This new model, The California Arts Project Arts Assessment Education Tool, TCAP-AEAT, has been developed to expedite the assessment process using programmatic developmental criterion and to supply assessment results and recommendations in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and professional development. This model is administered online, with computer-generated results available immediately and guidelines for school specific next steps from the TCAP assessor available within weeks. Providing immediate results, and supplying a plan of developmental next steps and timeline on the key areas of arts education will allow schools to implement recommendations and to be ready for a second assessment in the time that it traditionally took to do only the first assessment. The TCAP-AEAT online system will also serve as a data management system for schools and districts involved in assessment and development of arts education improvement plans. The data will be recorded, updated as needed, and will begin to provide a much-needed view of arts education programs statewide.

### **Arts Education and Assessment**

Arts education contributes in numerous ways to positive changes in overall learning context and subsequent student performance and engagement . Student engagement increases as students with diverse learning styles attain higher levels of achievement and personal success, and "levels the playing field" for disadvantaged student learners (Catterall, 1999). The arts engage multiple skills and abilities, and therefore provide opportunities to develop self-confidence, creative and critical thinking skills, self-regulation of learning, learning traits such as motivation and perseverance, and strengthen academic and social skills. Learning in the arts is more than promoting skills in each art form, as arts learning supports learning in other academic domains (Catterall, 1999). Learning communities grow

through personal and interpersonal connections to the arts. Arts in schools contribute to the neighborhood community, instructional practices, curriculum, and student learning (Deasy, 2002). The Congress of the United States stated in H.R.6, the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, "the most significant contribution of the arts to education reform is the transformation of teaching and learning" (H.R.6, Sec. 10401, 1994).

Evidence supports the inclusion of the arts in basic school curriculum, and as a necessary element in school reform. The development of the TCAP Arts Education Assessment Tool (TCAP-AEAT) represents an effort to build and improve quality arts programs for all students through assessment and reform.

Efforts to assess arts education programs have primarily taken the form of school self-study and planning. Previous arts education assessments required the formation of a community and school team, took 12 to 18 months to conduct the assessment and write reports, and also used a guidebook format with multiple paper checklists to assess seven to nine focus areas. Three key programs were used in California: Arts Count, 1990; Arts Education Program Toolkit, 2001; and Community Arts Education Partnership (CAEP), 2003.

There were inconsistencies in using these guidebooks. Reports were not timely, and the standards delineated considered outside arts partnerships as key providers of arts education. Under that policy, schools and districts did not take responsibility for providing arts education for all students. No digital records or databases were produced, resulting in loss of any school or district longitudinal data records.

Creating an online tool to access and integrate available data will eliminate paper checklists and provide a broader view of the school programs. Computer generated reporting will enable first-stage report generation immediately upon completion of the assessment. Focusing the assessment on the key areas of curriculum, instruction, and professional development will provide the necessary data to address core teaching and learning. The creation of the TCAP-AEAT database as part of the online system will allow longitudinal data to be collected and stored and will facilitate documentation of school change. The resulting assessment data will allow schools and districts to make better-informed decisions, thus improving student learning.

## **History**

Over the past twenty years in California there have been three major statewide efforts to strengthen public K-12 school arts education programs. Each of these programs, along with other smaller, efforts have included as a key part of the process the assessment of the current status of arts education programs either at all levels. An examination of the three major statewide efforts informed the design of The California Arts Project's Arts Education Assessment Tool, TCAP-AEAT.

In 1988, the National Endowment for the Arts' issued *Toward Civilization: A Report on Arts Education*. This national report to Congress on the status of arts education in the United States set in motion a number of efforts around the country aiming to improve arts education. Building upon this national momentum, California began the *Arts Count: Basic Learning for Tomorrow* initiative. The Arts Count initiative was funded by a number of sources including Chevron U.S.A. and the Getty Center for Education in the Arts and was supported in leadership by the California State Department of Education, Assembly Office of Research, California Legislative Coalition for Arts Education, and the California Arts Council. Arts Count brought together three Arts Education Task forces. These task forces assembled various constituencies from education and arts communities within the state, and issued a number of reports and accompanying recommendations.

One of the historic documents from this era was *The Handbook for Planning an Effective Visual and Performing Arts Program for California Public Schools Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* commissioned by the County/State Steering Committee of the California Association of County Superintendents of Schools in 1990. The *Handbook* was designed to function as a companion to other statewide arts education documents including the *Visual and Performing Arts Framework*. The *Handbook* was "...developed for teachers, administrators, parents, students, board members, artists and community members." (Arts Count, 1990). The *Handbook's* content was designed to enhance an established well-developed arts curriculum to help begin an arts education program, and to assess the status of current arts education within a school. The *Handbook* was distributed as part of the conference materials at a California State Staff Development and Curriculum Leadership Conference in 1990. Following distribution, committees of arts education representatives from schools and districts were pulled together within some regions for meetings aimed at engaging the stakeholders in utilizing the content found in the handbook. No official statewide data gathering system was put into place.

During the same time period, The California Arts Project, TCAP, emerged as one of the nine projects of the California Subject Matter Project. TCAP utilized the *Handbook* and other documents as a central part of their teacher and administrative development strand throughout the early 1990s. Teachers and administrators attending either open or invitational institutes offered by TCAP's regional professional development centers were trained on the goals of the *Arts Count* initiatives, became familiar with current data on arts education within the state, developed in-service workshops, and were charged with administering the Visual and Performing Arts Program Assessment found in Appendix III of the *Handbook*.

The *Handbook's* Visual and Performing Arts Program Assessment provided a set of tools designed to assess the status of current arts education programs. The seven categories of assessment each had a four-point scale for scoring from effective to ineffective. The seven areas of assessment were curriculum, instruction, staff development, resources, program support and implementation, and program evaluation. Teachers that attended or lead TCAP institutes over the next few years, along with administrators attending, engaged in assessing their current arts programs. Many developed an improvement plan, and facilitated the adoption of arts education policies by their local school boards. While these efforts and results were shared at the regional level within the TCAP community and sometimes county offices, there was not a statewide effort to gather data, so impact of the assessment or plan implementation was negligible. Formal records on the assessments, if kept, have been lost, put into storage, or forgotten. Other data or results of the implementation around the larger *Arts Count* initiative, including arts education assessment efforts either at county or in other settings during this period either were not recorded or have been lost with changing leadership. Most information from this period relies on oral recounts by leaders from that time period or through the few existing copies of the published documents.

Nine years later, in 1997, Delaine Eastin, then California Superintendent of Public Instruction, issued a call to action: "The lack of attention to arts education has been the silent crisis in California schools for too long..."(ArtsWork, 1997). In the spring of 1997, following the release of the 1996 *Visual and Performing Arts Framework for Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*, Eastin created the Superintendent's Task Force on the Visual and Performing Arts. The task force consisted of 60 members from the

arts education stakeholder community that included researchers, scholars, parents, business representatives, teachers and others. The result of the four-month effort was the report *ArtsWork: A Call for Arts Education for All California Students* that outlined five key recommendations to improve arts education within the state. The five recommendations included a call for visual and performing arts content standards for K-12 students (which were adopted in 2001 by the State Board of Education), support for arts programs, literacy in and through the arts, preparation for career, and access for all students.

Following the publication of *ArtsWork* in early 1998, the California Department of Education sent each school a short questionnaire with the purpose of gathering information on frequently asked questions regarding arts education. The goal was to establish a baseline of knowledge on the status of arts education within California public schools. Questions centered on who was teaching the arts, what arts disciplines were being taught, what did schools see as indicators of success, and how were schools funding such instruction. The survey resulted in a small number of responses statewide. While not seen as an assessment process, the *2000 ArtsWork Report*, which was only released in small numbers in a prepublication draft format, provided additional insight as to the status of California's arts education and was the precursor to the Model Arts Education Program and its Network of districts. The data from the 2000 report seems to be only available in existing copies of the prepublication draft.

Also in 1998, inspired by the draft report and assisted by a booming economy and tax surplus within California the ArtsWork Visual and Performing Arts Grant Program for K -12 public school districts was established. This 6 million dollar grant program provided districts with seed funding to improve their standards-based arts education program in a number of areas. One of the focus areas available to districts was the California Model Arts Program (MAP) Network. This program was implemented through the California Department of Education in collaboration of with the California Alliance for Arts Education, the California Arts Council, and The California Arts Project, TCAP. The MAP Network began in 1999 with fourteen school districts working together with the California Department of Education and The California Arts Project to develop a process "...to help school districts to evaluate, improve, and expand visual and performing arts programs in California schools through a guided self-evaluation process, professional development seminars, conferences and a supportive network of colleagues."(MAP Toolkit, 2001)

The next few years of the MAP Network produced the next generation of tools for schools and districts to assess the status of their arts education program. During this period the MAP Network and its collaborators had developed *The Arts Education Program Toolkit, A Visual and Performing Arts Program Assessment Process*. The *Toolkit* guides a district or school through a complex assessment process examining what is place for arts education and identifying the continuum of next steps in nine key focus areas. These focus areas are standards-based curriculum, instruction and methodology, student assessment, professional development, program administration and personnel, partnerships and collaborations, funding, resources and facilities, and program evaluation. The nine focus areas reflect a number of the seven original categories of program assessment found in the *Arts Count Handbook*. The *MAP Toolkit* provides a self-assessment questionnaire and inventory, matrix continuum outlining achievement levels of best practices, building, and foundation for each of the nine areas, and templates to guide the development of a written report and action plan.

By the end of the MAP Network Grant Program in 2003-2004, the network had expanded to 53 districts and had begun to move to an on-line *Toolkit*. During the granting period many districts struggled with the complexity of the data collection for the *Toolkit's* nine areas. The MAP Network, while no longer operational due to funding cutbacks, opened its doors in 2005 to any district within the state. At this time the California Department of Education (CDE) has access to some of the data gathered in the pilot over that period of time, but given the individual approach to the administration of the assessment within schools and districts, the data only provides locally useful feedback.

In 2002-2003, as a response to the complexity of the MAP *Toolkit* process and to engage additional schools and districts in evaluation of their arts education programs, the Community Arts Education Project (CAEP), was developed by the California State PTA and California Alliance for Arts Education, an alliance of arts education organizations within California. CAEP's set of tools was based on the *MAP Toolkit's* nine focus areas and continuum. The CAEP was designed to help parents, local schools and school districts to work together to create district wide systemic change in arts education through a simpler process than the MAP *Toolkit*. Districts using the CAEP process found gathering and assessing the data in the nine areas took at least a year of monthly or bi-monthly meetings. The CAEP was not an effort to gather statewide data, but an effort to support grassroots arts

education improvement. As such, it has no system for gathering or storing statewide data.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

TCAP, through its university-based K-12 regional professional development centers, found the need to develop and maintain an assessment tool and process which would both inform and guide schools and districts in improving their standard-based arts education, capture local data, and provide a statewide view of the ever-changing status of arts education within California. As each of the initiatives over the past twenty years has unfolded, it often became apparent that the regional TCAP centers had the only existing centralized informal history or knowledge of past efforts within schools, districts, counties, or regions. TCAP in its role as a California Subject Matter Project reviewed the past and current attempts at assessing arts education programs and began the development of a tool for use by their regional centers.

The multi-faceted goals of TCAP assessment tool and process include supporting the TCAP regional professional development centers in their partnership and technical assistance work with teachers, schools, and districts, gathering and management of assessment data both regionally and statewide, providing an assessment process that builds knowledge about standards-based arts education, and providing feedback and an outline for an improvement action plan aligned with key areas of focus critical to the improvement of arts education. TCAP's Statewide Leadership and Development Center guided the development process working in concert with the regional professional development centers.

The TCAP-AEAT is designed to aid schools in developing exemplary standards-based school arts education programs for all students. The tool provides baseline information that serves as a foundation for assessment and is, in the form of a school profile, shaped by information from various non-intersecting databases. It assesses the school arts program in the three core areas of curriculum, instruction, and professional development. It generates a report and individualized recommendations to help schools develop, refine, and implement programmatic changes in those areas. Finally, it provides a database depository of school assessment information integrated with California Department of Education databases. The follow-up support is in the form of a scored assessment, arts implementation level (pre-

foundation, foundation, building, best practices), history of school profile information, report, and implementation of school action plans.

## **METHODS**

### **Tool Development**

The TCAP-AEAT development process began with a review of both national and California arts education program assessment tools. A deeper analysis of the California tools was conducted, including the strengths and weaknesses of the related assessment processes and results. Within the TCAP network of statewide and regional directors, over *ninety combined years* of hands-on experience was tapped, covering development, implementation and assessment of action plans from the California tools. The group incorporated this working knowledge throughout the development of the tool.

The first revelation of the analysis and review was a need to narrow the TCAP-AEAT assessment areas to those that laid the foundation for implementation of standards-based arts education for all students and that aligned with TCAP's mission and goals. The three core areas of curriculum, instruction and professional development were identified as the areas on which TCAP would focus its assessment. A need to build upon past assessment tools and scoring levels found within the state was also identified. A first draft of possible assessment items in the three areas was developed. A sub-committee of the TCAP leadership undertook a series of refinements and calibrations. The goal of the assessment in each area was to structure the prompts as an embedded professional development experience, fostering understanding of the key characteristics of a standards-based arts education program in the participants engaging in the assessment, while also leading the school and district in developing their action plan. The refinement of the assessments prompts and related scoring statements took place over a nine-month period, in a process that moved between the sub-committee and the entire TCAP regional leadership.

The end product of the assessment process for the school is the TCAP-AEAT Report. The development of the school report aspect of the TCAP-AEAT coincided with the development of the assessment areas and prompts. Discussions were held to outline the key components for the report beyond the assessment results. Existing state databases were examined and key databases were selected.

The web-based structure of the TCAP-AEAT was designed and built by WebMedia Solutions. WebMedia had built and maintained other web-based tools for TCAP and other educational agencies. They were selected due to their understanding of the educational goals, ability to access existing state databases, their knowledge of TCAP methods of working, and attention to and support of the end users of the tool.

### **Pilot Study**

Pilot testing began in fall 2006 across the state within the 15 regions of the state educational agency. TCAP site directors in all CSMP regions in California assessed eighty-four schools, elementary through high school. The schools assessed include urban, rural, and suburban, with many "targeted" improvement schools. Site directors and assistants met with principal stakeholders at school sites. Site directors in close geographic proximity were able to conduct double assessments by assessing each other's schools. Thirteen of the eighty-four assessed schools, or 15% of the sample, were double assessed for inter-rater reliability tests.

The first part of the data analysis examined double assessment data gathered by site directors. TCAP site directors who were in close geographic proximity to each other were able to go in to each other's schools and conduct the assessment a second time. The site directors were the only individuals who were in on the development discussions and knowledgeable enough to conduct the assessment with school personnel. For the next year's study, we will conduct an assessor training retreat and train other TCAP personnel to administer the TCAP-AEAT.

## **RESULTS**

### **TCAP-AEAT Development**

The general aim of this work has been to create an easily administered arts education assessment that produces and records timely, pertinent data to inform school arts education reform. TCAP assessor feedback is direct and provides guidance immediately on how to improve the program to improve student learning. The iterative cycle assesses the program, implements the plan, and reviews the data.

### **Pilot Study**

Tests of inter-rater agreement were performed on 15% of the sample (13 out of 84 schools). Correlations on all items comprising each of the three quality indicators (9 items for Curriculum, 10 items for Instruction, 8 items for Professional Development), as well as the

means for each quality indicator, showed that inter-rater agreement was excellent (all but 4 coefficients  $\geq .90$ , all  $ps < .01$ ).

We used a Repeated-Measures Analysis of Variance to examine differences among the means of the three quality indicators for each school. Results indicated that Professional Development was significantly higher ( $M = 2.81$ ,  $SD = 1.99$ ) than both Curriculum ( $M = 1.88$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ) and Instruction ( $M = 1.81$ ,  $SD = .82$ );  $F_{(2, 166)} = 31.18$ ,  $p < .001$ .

## **Discussion**

The TCAP-AEAT helps identify school program strengths and weaknesses to inform curricular, instructional and professional development decisions. The tool assesses factors central to an effective arts program, a consistent series of criteria in curriculum, instruction, and professional development. The TCAP-AEAT process is a participatory one that supports school community reflection, that respects and includes the school community, and that enables the most data collection with the least effort. TCAP-AEAT tracks program improvements over time, and allows comparisons between schools, districts, and similar programs.

The TCAP-AEAT assesses whether schools are achieving quality arts programs, as the indicators in the criterion statements are observable and measurable evidence. As school arts teams evaluate their school program against the quality indicators in the twenty-seven criterion statements, they better understand the level of their progress and commitment toward a quality arts program. The rubric levels then give the teams an understanding of the next steps in an action plan to improve the program. The process of assessment becomes a spiral process of data collecting, evaluating and scoring evidence, analyzing results, making an action plan and timeline for improvements and implementation, and continuing the process through consistent reevaluation over time. The assessment serves as a guide for improvement and accountability while informing the stakeholders about the status of their arts education program. It is hoped that the TCAP-AEAT model assessment, as implemented within the partnership of TCAP and school and district will contribute to deeper understanding of the role of arts in education and the teaching and learning process.

In the pilot study, only the school profiler and the twenty-seven core criterion statements were used for assessment purposes. The other aspects of the assessment, including school history, will be included in the next study iteration. The website development for the TCAP-AEAT

includes only the critical twenty-seven criterion statements and database information at this time. Further website development is in process to incorporate the full assessment for the next study iteration in the fall of 2007.

Since we have established excellent reliability in TCAP-AEAT administration using site directors, we are confident that we can extend the assessor work to other TCAP personnel. After further analysis and revision of the AEAT this spring, we plan on developing an assessor notebook and related professional development. The establishment of reliability makes future rating more efficient, and gives us confidence in extending the assessor role in summer of 2007.

We examined the quality indicators with a Repeated-Measures Analysis of Variance to examine differences between curriculum, instruction, and professional development. All three means are low, indicating that none of the three quality indicators of curriculum, instruction, and professional development are being addressed adequately. Perhaps even more effort needs to go into the curriculum and instruction, since both of those quality indicators are quite low – on a scale from 0-4, they are about a one. This in turn, directs the focus of future professional development toward the curriculum and instruction as priorities.

The TCAP-AEAT provides us with a reliable arts education assessment tool for curriculum, instruction, and professional development. Additionally, it allowed us to assess each separately, thus identifying areas (all three, but especially curriculum and instruction) where more attention needs to be focused.

School administration may be beginning professional development without being completely prepared by curriculum and instruction indicators. Professional development can be embedded within the process of developing curriculum and examining instruction but, in and of itself, it does not promote curriculum and instruction. On a scale of 0-4 for each criterion statement, the curriculum is near the bottom, and instruction is near the bottom, and professional development is halfway up the scale.

Effective professional development leading to improved teaching and learning is tied to the established curriculum and the instructional needs of students. Schools surveyed may be putting more emphasis on professional development, but may need to focus development on the building blocks of curriculum and instruction before promoting the

professional development. This data provides an opening point of dialogue with the schools as they begin their improvement plan.

### **Next Steps**

The TCAP-AEAT development team will continue to gather information and assessment data through June 2007. During the summer of 2007, TCAP will analyze the data and revise the AEAT as necessary. The website should be fully developed by the end of the summer with the new changes. TCAP will develop an assessor notebook and conduct professional development for TCAP-AEAT assessors. In fall 2007, a new assessment study will be conducted in which TCAP will assess 40-60 schools in all 15 CSMP regions, including urban, rural, and suburban school settings.

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**Appendix I**  
**RELIABILITY**  
**Column of Correlation Coefficients**

**Curriculum**

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>significance</i>	<i>p</i>
1.	1.0	$p < .001$
2.	1.0	$p < .001$
3.	1.0	$p < .001$
4.	.773	$p < .01$
5.	1.0	$p < .001$
6.	1.0	$p < .001$
7.	.918	$p < .001$
8.	1.0	$p < .001$
9.	1.0	$p < .001$

**Instruction**

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>significance</i>	<i>p</i>
1.	1.0	$p < .001$
2.	.843	$p < .001$
3.	1.0	$p < .001$
4.	1.0	$p < .001$
5.	1.0	$p < .001$
6.	.991	$p < .001$
7.	.964	$p < .001$
8.	1.0	$p < .001$
9.	.970	$p < .001$
10.	.970	$p < .001$

**Professional Development**

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>significance</i>	<i>p</i>
1.	1.0	$p < .01$
2.	1.0	$p < .001$
3.	1.0	$p < .001$
4.	1.0	$p < .001$
5.	1.0	$p < .001$
6.	1.0	$p < .001$
7.	1.0	$p < .001$
8.	.677	$p < .01$

