

DRAFT  
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**CORE STATEMENT**  
What it is and why it's important

**INTERDISCIPLINARY CHECKLIST**  
Framework to track integration and collaboration

**ASSESSMENT RUBRIC**  
Framework to target learning and track progress, revision, final evaluation

**ARTIST'S STATEMENT & REFLECTION PAPER**  
Framework to guide self-evaluation of project's depth (fundamental questions), breadth (voices)

**INTEGRATING AUTHENTIC "REAL TIME" LEARNING**  
Structure to facilitate quality of math and art voices in core, interdisciplinary connections between art forms, and use of multifaceted guest artists to integrate art forms.

**TEACHER RESOURCES**  
On-line information to help set appropriate levels for critical thinking and creative problem solving processes in project learning and assessment

## CORE STATEMENT

A description and rationale for students, parents, community, teachers, administrators, and auditors

### What is core?

Core is a student-centered, project-based experience that facilitates a full range of learning styles, contextualizes knowledge and skills to assure relevance and brain-compatible learning, and assesses what is worth measuring. It teaches collaboration that rewards individuals for what they know and encourages social skills and respect for others.

Core consists of arts and academics based work directly aligned with an art-centered theme. It is the heart of integration for an entire school. A framework of inquiry, known as the *fundamental questions*, or *FQs*, guides the study to be deep and significant. Inclusion of many disciplines through the *five voices* (*artist, mathematician, scientist, social scientist, and writer*) insures breadth of learning. Core is a meaningful application of knowledge and skills learned in separate classes and through guided/independent research.

Assessment in core is authentic, collaborative, on going, and holistic. It has true value because students choose work that is creative, useful, and relevant to them as individuals. Evaluation involves stages of reflection by teachers and students. Clear targets, common to all disciplines, are based on essential learnings (problem solving, communicating, connecting, and critical thinking) and are shared at the start. Checkpoints are provided to determine where improvement can be made and time for revision towards mastery is provided. Students demonstrate where/how they incorporate each discipline into their project in a reflection paper. Integration of art and academic subjects is tracked yearly and remains on file.

### Why is core important?

The purpose of an integrated curriculum is to eliminate fragmentation of a separate subject approach, to alleviate problems of relevance, and solve dilemmas of overcrowded curricula with separate methods, procedures, and assessments in each discipline. An interdisciplinary approach builds life-skill competencies without regard to subject matter divisions. Information is re-positioned and accessed when pertinent to studies. Knowledge is not acquired as a collection of facts, but in a context created by a theme or topic. Learning becomes about doing something with/for its own value. Arts projects have proven to be an effective catalyst for integration as they provide a rich source of meaningful themes.

A large body of scientific evidence shows learning is accelerated by connections among disciplines. Experts in educational brain research (Jensen, Sprenger, Sylwester, others) explain the biochemistry of increased neurotransmitter flow and growth of dendrites in the brain. Numerous case studies provide the concrete evidence of enhanced learning in areas of investigation, analysis, problem solving, synthesis and reflection when students study arts connected to core subjects (Davis). Thinking skills, self-perception, and involvement are shown to be significantly higher across science and the humanities among students who study arts (University of Maryland study).

In addition, graduates of VSAA provide a testimony to the value of the learning environment and structure of core. Students have high test scores and are successful in college and work environments. Individuals speak willingly of their love of integrated project learning and the high degree of preparedness it gives them for post graduation years.

# PROJECT ASSESSMENT ACROSS CURRICULUM

Criteria shared at project start to target learning, guide checkpoint progress & revision, and provide final evaluation

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Project title \_\_\_\_\_

Core teacher/team \_\_\_\_\_ Date of checkpoint, final evaluation \_\_\_\_\_

| CORE ELs<br>ASSESSMENT<br>RUBRIC   | 4<br>strong   | 3<br>proficient | 2<br>developing | 1<br>emerging | 0 | SCORE |
|--|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|---|-------|
| <p><b>COMMUNICATES</b><br/><i>(content knowledge)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• arts: 1/more forms</li> <li>• academics.: sci.,la/ss</li> <li>• math *</li> </ul> <p>demonstrate ideas:<br/>recognize, repeat (5 Ws),<br/>describe, abstract, create.**<br/>convey intent, presents with<br/>audience awareness</p> | Target EL(s): |                 |                 |               |   |       |
| <p><b>CONNECTS</b><br/><i>(interdis. Understanding)</i></p> <p>make historical, cultural,<br/>personal and interpersonal<br/>links,: Integrate, develop,<br/>rearrange, modify, substitute,<br/>synthesize, invent.** Integrate<br/>multiple disciplines and<br/>media, collaborate</p>  | Target EL(s): |                 |                 |               |   |       |
| <p><b>ANALYZES</b><br/><i>(process critical thinking)</i></p> <p>recognize patterns and<br/>relationships: listi dissect,<br/>explain, classify, investigate,<br/>compare, support, predicts,<br/>infers, interprets **</p>  | Target EL(s): |                 |                 |               |   |       |
| <p><b>PROBLEM SOLVES</b><br/><i>(creation, production)</i></p> <p>recognize a question, collect<br/>information, selects<br/>appropriate tools Combine,<br/>revise, construct, interpret,<br/>synthesize, create**</p>   | Target EL(s): |                 |                 |               |   |       |
| <p><b>EVALUATES</b><br/><i>(product critical thinking,<br/>reflection)</i></p> <p>appraise, criticize, compare,<br/>discriminate, support,<br/>convince, conclude,<br/>summarize **</p>  | Target EL(s): |                 |                 |               |   |       |

\*required to apply math in a relevant way once per semester.

\*\*suggested cognitive domain descriptors listed in approximate order of ascending difficulty ( selection of descriptor terms made by teacher/student to correspond to individual student's developmental stage)

# ARTIST'S STATEMENT & REFLECTION PAPER

Evaluation to be completed at project conclusion to assess overall effort (process) and achievement (product)  
Attach to ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Project title \_\_\_\_\_

Core teacher/team \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## A. ARTIST'S STATEMENT

1. Description of theme or topic (What was your **product**?)
2. Solution to a problem (What **process** did you use to make something work?)

## B. REFLECTION

1. VOICES: Explain/Support/Justify/Defend your decisions concerning *voices* used in your project (artist, mathematician, scientist, social scientist, and writer).

2. FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS: Describe/Explain/Assess/Critique the influence of the *fundamental questions* in the creation of your project. (*Evidence*: What do you know and how do you know it? *Perspective*: From whose viewpoint is it presented? *Connections* : How is it related to other things? *Supposition*: What if something was different? What might come next? *Relevance*: Why is this important?)

### 3. SELF-EVALUATION

- a. How satisfied were you with your effort?
- b. What would you do differently next time? Why?

### 4. GROUP EVALUATION (to be used for group work)

- a. What skills/expertise did you bring to your group.
- b. Describe the role/contribution of each group member

Use as many pages as needed to give thorough answers

# INTEGRATING AUTHENTIC “REAL TIME” LEARNINGS

A rationale and procedure for good connections

## I. MORNING ACADEMIC CLASSES

To better integrate math into Core, we suggest that each semester math teachers in the different classes throughout the school **require each student to write or design evidence of learning in at least one major core project for math class credit.** This could happen at different times during the semester, so there would not be a paper load for the math teacher at one time. *[For instance, in Lynn’s geometry class an 8th grade purple team student might submit, in early October, an architectural plan for an Islamic citadel; while a 10th grade red team student might submit a math voice essay about a tessellation design late in December.]* Students’ planning and sharing the math connection to their Core work in math classes would increase the relevance of integration and cross-age and cross-team communication.

EXAMPLES: *For one Calculus grade, a yellow team student brings to Heath Anglebeck a “voice” paper or design that connects the Core project and one or more concepts or skills in the current semester’s math curriculum. For one 6th grade math grade, a blue team student brings to Elaine Wright a “voice” paper or design that connects the Core project to one or more concepts or skills in the semester’s math curriculum.*

Math teachers assigned to teach Core will have proactive responsibility this year not just in their own area of math expertise, but in helping individual students make authentic connections between each project and the student’s own current math experience. Math teachers not assigned to a Core team will gain greater knowledge and appreciation of the concept of integrated Core projects because of the variety of their students’ work.

(see appendix “A1” for verification from math teacher back to Core teacher)

## II. AFTERNOON ARTS CLASSES

In integrated Core projects at least once a semester **students should practice new or recent learnings from their own current afternoon arts classes.** Core teachers should require some tangible evidence of the connection of their (“signed-off”) by individual arts teachers. In the past, unless core projects were very art-form specific (ie: Middle School at the start of the year) students were free to choose any art form in which they were interested, and could perform at any level. Many projects were successful, but two negative results were possible:

1) artwork was sometimes facile and not commensurate with students’ ability ie: the quick pencil sketch, the elementary-level dance routine, the structureless poem (possible benefit: comfort level with the art form might allow more challenging work in a difficult theme). 2) the artwork attempted was sometimes far beyond the student’s current ability. ie: the MIA project that was lost in the computer, the sculpture that imploded in the kiln, the original one-act that became a skit with narrator (possible benefit: risk-taking and self-reflective evaluation is empowering and points the way to growth.)

Students must be accountable for their learning in the arts, and challenge themselves to

do their best work. Our arts classes have sequenced curricular goals, so all teachers in every arts discipline could easily become responsible, along with their students, for defining what artistic principles and skills are being taught that quarter. Core teachers would learn different arts curricula and could more fairly assess student art work, and the many arts teachers not assigned to a Core team would gain greater knowledge and appreciation of the concept of integrated Core projects. Result? A “conversation among equals” about excellence in the arts.

Different Core teams might ask for the evidence at varying times. Arts teachers would only need to acknowledge that their students had indeed been exposed to the stated art lesson. *[For instance, in Geoff’s Core class an 8th grade purple team student might submit a project proposal about Ming Dynasty Chinese life with the design of a 3-D collage using elements of depth and texture -- a recent lesson in Chris’s Explore art class. A 10th grade red team student in Leslie’s Core class might write an artists voice essay about creating her original song about sea travel in traditional rhyming ballad form (a recent lesson in Jennifer’s Literary Arts L1 class.)*

(see appendix “A2” for verification from Core teacher back to arts teacher)

### CORE-MATH INTEGRATION (A1)

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester: 1 2

Math Class/Period \_\_\_\_\_ Math Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Color Team: \_\_\_\_\_ Core Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Title or Description of Core Project \_\_\_\_\_

This student has shown sufficient evidence, in writing or design, that he/she has incorporated math learnings from the above course into this core project.

signed: \_\_\_\_\_

math teacher

deliver to core teacher

## CORE-ARTS INTEGRATION (A2)

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester 1 2

Arts Class/Period \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Color Team: \_\_\_\_\_ Core Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Title or Description of Core Project \_\_\_\_\_

This student has shown sufficient evidence, in writing or design, that he/she has incorporated art learnings from the above course into this core project.

signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Art Teacher

Deliver to Core Teacher

### III. GUEST ARTISTS

In this highly interdisciplinary year, we propose that VSAA use guest artists (AIR) in new and different ways. We could book them for several days, so that we can share them with various arts classes to challenge students' perceptions and encourage interdisciplinary collaboration. Finding multi-talented people willing to experiment outside their professional art forms might be difficult but would be an excellent way for students to meet "integrated artists" and to challenge their own perceptions.

examples: *Patrick Vala, stage fight choreographer, could visit a dance class where students use essential fight moves as a basis for choreography. He could visit a writing class and answer interview questions by three students while others listen and then write the feature story. (Or he could read from his own well-crafted prose!) A sculptor's work could inform a piano composition; a pianist could talk to vocalists about the difficulties of accompanying opera singers; a filmmaker could give "audition" lessons to a theatre class, a cartoonist could talk politics with CWP students...*

### IV. PARALLEL ARTS CLASSES

Collaboration between arts teachers and their students comes naturally to some. This year we should make a formal commitment to bring together different arts classes that meet at the same time in the afternoon. An attempt at combined projects is possible. Whether informal and fun, or solidified into a long-term project, student work that connects multiple art forms is yet another approach to making connections, this time laterally, across the curriculum.

examples: *Violinists meet during lit arts. Poets could listen and write; or musicians could hear work and accompany it in performance; or we could all see a painting and respond in poetry or music. . . A group of sketch artists could draw significant shapes they see in a staged theatre scene; or the actors could create improv based on their sketches . . . MIA films dancers; dancers create shapes for sculptors; writers and dancers and musicians from 3 classes get together one day in trios and create one artwork that uses the skills of all three. . .*

## TEACHER RESOURCES

Standards, lessons, rubrics, and sample vocabulary appropriate to various levels of critical thinking

- **[www.getty.edu/artsednet/resources/Scope/Standards/national.html#achievement](http://www.getty.edu/artsednet/resources/Scope/Standards/national.html#achievement)**  
national content and achievement standards for visual arts, listed by grade levels
- **[resources/Scope/Sequence/Standards/nsgrid.html](http://www.getty.edu/artsednet/resources/Scope/Sequence/Standards/nsgrid.html)**  
includes sample assignments in some ability areas for each of 4 levels (level 3=middle school, level 4=high school)
  
- **[www.kcmetro.cc.mo.us/longview/ctac/blooms.html](http://www.kcmetro.cc.mo.us/longview/ctac/blooms.html)**  
excellent sample questions to guide students' critical thinking
  
- **[www.its.foxvalley.tec.wi.us/iss/curric-assessment/COLUMN.html](http://www.its.foxvalley.tec.wi.us/iss/curric-assessment/COLUMN.html)**  
excellent guide for questioning strategies and assessment of student thinking processes
  
- **[www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/actbank/collaborub.html](http://www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/actbank/collaborub.html)**  
collaboration/teamwork rubric. used to teach and evaluate
  
- **[www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/actbank/interview.html](http://www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/actbank/interview.html)**  
good format, important "rewrite" concept, appropriate for checkpoint evaluations, specific descriptors adaptable, can be modified to 4-point scale with "0" as the rewrite
  
- **[www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/actbank/reportrub.html](http://www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/actbank/reportrub.html)**  
good rubric format, "interest level" should say "vocabulary choice", for a more positive effect the order can be reversed to be high to low (4-0)
  
- **[www.marcopolo-education.org](http://www.marcopolo-education.org)**  
a good classroom integration source, with links to academic disciplines
  
- **[www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org](http://www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org)**  
curricula, lessons, activities with art and academic connections, listed by levels