

WHAT MAKES ART CURRICULUM HIGH QUALITY?



A curriculum can have all the right pieces and still fall short.

Standards, lessons, assessments, and resources all matter. But simply checking those boxes doesn't necessarily make instructional materials high quality. What really sets strong curriculum apart is something less visible: the thinking behind it.

The best art curriculum doesn't simply tell students what to make. It creates opportunities for them to think, question, explore, make choices, and find meaning through art.

So, what should you look for in high-quality art instructional materials?

Look Beyond the Lesson

When evaluating curriculum, it's easy to focus on what you can see. How many lessons are included? Are the projects engaging? Are the images high quality? Are the standards aligned? Are there assessment tools and teacher resources?

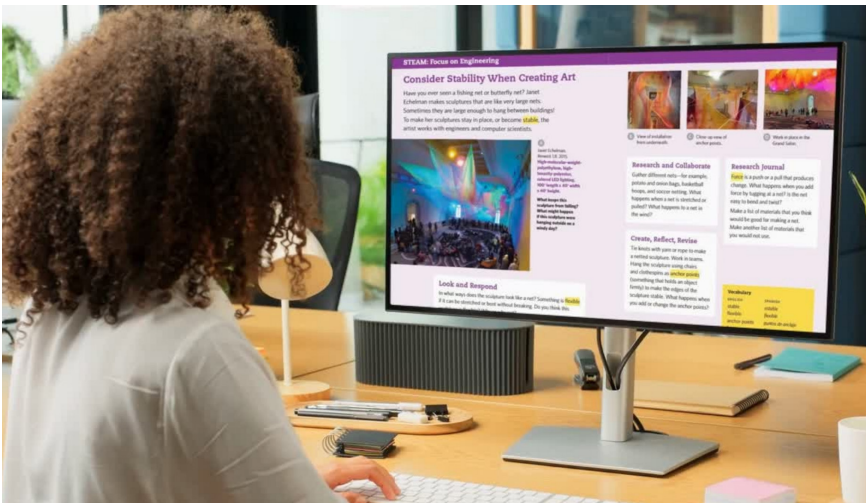
Those things matter. But they don't tell the whole story.

It's also worth asking: What are students being asked to think about? Where do they have opportunities to make decisions? Are they encouraged to be curious and investigate? How does the curriculum make space for different learners?

These questions get beneath the surface of the materials and into the thinking that shaped them.

At Davis Publications, three approaches are central to that thinking: Big Ideas and Essential Questions, teaching through inquiry, and differentiated instruction.

So, what should you look for in high-quality art instructional materials?



Big Ideas and Essential Questions

Big Ideas and Essential Questions give students meaningful concepts to explore and connect art learning to their lives and the world around them.

Rather than making the finished project the sole focus, they help create a larger purpose for learning. Students have something meaningful to consider and revisit as they learn.

Teaching Through Inquiry

Teaching through inquiry encourages students to ask questions, investigate ideas, experiment, and develop their own understanding.

Instead of simply following directions to arrive at a predetermined result, students have opportunities to make choices, explore possibilities, and learn through the process of discovery.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction provides multiple pathways for students with different experiences, interests, readiness levels, and ways of learning.

Thoughtful curriculum anticipates that students won't all enter the classroom with the same needs or perspectives—and it provides flexibility so more students can engage meaningfully with the learning.

It's About How the Pieces Work Together

Each of these approaches can strengthen instruction on its own. But when they work together, they can transform the learning experience. Big Ideas give students something to think about. Inquiry gives them a reason to investigate. Differentiation helps more students find a meaningful way into learning.

Together, they move art instruction beyond simply completing a project. They create opportunities for students to think deeply, make purposeful choices, explore ideas, and connect what they're learning to their own experiences.

And that kind of thoughtful design doesn't happen by accident. It requires intentional decisions about what students should learn, how they will engage with that learning, and how instructional materials can support teachers in making those experiences possible.



EXPLORE THIS THINKING DEEPER.



Visit **DavisArt.com/HQIM** to download our free professional paper and explore our free webinars:

- Teaching with Themes Webinar
- Teaching Through Inquiry Webinar
- Differentiated Instruction Webinar

