



---

## Introduction

Art is a way of visually communicating thoughts and feelings. Art works reflect the artist's experience and responses to life. Student art work must also be a reflection of students' concerns and interests. Art work which communicates effectively, exhibits visual organization. Knowledge of and experience with design, media and subject matter all contribute to effective visual communication. Student art work can only be as effective as their preparation in these three areas.

In the middle years, adolescents become more socially aware. Peer group pressures and societal values are examined and questioned. It is therefore essential that adolescents deal with visual stimuli familiar to them in the context of today's society, since these can influence the formation of their attitudes and behaviour.

For the adolescent, art is no longer the spontaneous and free form of expression that it is for the younger child. Middle years students are often critical of their technical abilities. In order to provide students with the tools to develop greater self-confidence and more mature self-evaluation, the middle years art program should allow for growth in design knowledge and skills with art media, as well as extensive explorations of subject matter.

To foster creativity in the middle years, the art program should provide problem-solving situations that encourage students to use their imaginations. These problem solving situations should start with topics that are of relevance and interest to

the adolescent student. The art program should also provide situations in which students have the opportunity to talk about art and the environment.

Art instructors must balance structured guidance in skill development with an understanding of adolescent behaviour and an appreciation for the imagery preferred by this age group. Planning a variety of approaches to visual problems and considering methods of motivating students and instilling excitement into the art program will enhance the art experience for all. Above all, once the groundwork is laid, art teachers must trust in the most useful resource available to them - the students themselves - a give them the opportunity to explore, to discover, and to share their knowledge.