



Advancing Art Education

NAEA Policy Statement on Involvement in Art Contests and Competitions for Students at the Secondary Level

Student participation in art contests and competitions is a controversial subject which has long been a matter of concern for members of the art education profession at the junior high and senior high school levels.

The NAEA recognizes that art competitions can serve as a positive experience for those students who wish to enter such contests and who possess sufficient emotional maturity to separate the concept of losing from the idea of rejection as a person. The advisability of a certain group or individuals entering art competitions usually falls to the judgment of the art teacher who has the knowledge and understanding of both the competition and the maturity of the involved students.

Whenever it is the responsibility of the art teacher to supervise and/or endorse the entry of a secondary level group or individual in art contests and competitions, the NAEA extends the following guidelines:

1. The art teacher should assume the responsibility of making known to the students involved the specific rules of the art competition and the specific criteria upon which the artwork will be judged.
2. No work which has been directly copied from any published source should ever be entered into a competition unless the student has creatively modified or reinterpreted the original work using the student's own vision or style. Only work which is the unique creation of the individual student should be entered in competitions.

Art teachers must be vigilant in making a distinction about the difference between blatant copying and inventive incorporation of borrowed motifs for a creative statement. Contemporary artists such as Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jasper Johns incorporate recognizable motifs and symbols into their works, adapting the image to their own creative ends.

Students whose desire for visual representation is limited by environment or experience may have to rely on a published image as a guide when producing a work, but the student's artwork must modify or reinterpret the original idea in order to be acceptable for competition. Henri Rousseau is an example of an artist who had to interpret second-hand the experiences of others when portraying the birds and beasts in his jungle paintings.

3. Students should not engage in reproducing other artists' visual images for the purpose of presenting them as their own creative work in competitions.
4. The art teacher should assume the responsibility of making the ethics of art competition known to students and to refuse to approve the entry of student work which carries any doubt as to its authenticity and originality. Keeping this policy in mind will also help avoid copyright infringement problems for the student artist.

National Art Education Association

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5. The art teacher should assume the responsibility for aiding students in understanding that judgment of the work of art in any given contest is not a judgment of the worth of the individual who created the work, but only of the work itself in one particular instance.

Art competition at the secondary level can be a healthy and rewarding experience. Students should, through their art instruction, have gained some understanding of aesthetic and qualitative criteria for judging the merit and quality of artworks, their own and others. Most student at this level can enter competitions and grow artistically and emotionally as a result of having their work judged against that of their peers. It is the responsibility of the art teacher to help ensure that secondary involvement is kept on the highest ethical level and that the competition is a positive experience for all.

Adoption: Approved by the Delegates Assembly and the NAEA Board of Directors, April 1988. Los Angeles, California. {Board of Directors, April, 1988, Motion #18}

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