



Advancing Art Education

NAEA Policy on Contests And Competitions Adopted March 2001

The National Art Education Association endorses only supervised and thoughtfully presented art contests or competitions at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The nature and purposes of contests for students at these levels are often incompatible with several of the tenets of a quality art education advocated by NAEA.

- Art experiences need to reflect the national standards of a comprehensive art education. They may reflect any or all of the four components: studio production, art history, aesthetics, and criticism. Too often contests and competition focus only on the final product of an isolated and arbitrary studio experience.
- Art education is grounded in age-appropriate developmental practices. Elementary lessons focus on process, exploration, and initial experience with skills and concepts relating to art. Middle level lessons build upon exploration and broadening of skill and concept development. High school art courses integrate the components of a comprehensive art education toward a deeper understanding of art and the refinement of the student's personal expression.

The art teacher must carefully consider and evaluate each contest and competition based upon these criteria:

1. The endeavor is educationally relevant and instructionally valuable.
2. National visual arts standards are supported.
3. Expectations are developmentally appropriate.
4. The contest or competition fits into the instructional sequence without disruption.
5. The structure, procedure, and timeline are reasonable.
6. Particular products or businesses are not endorsed.
7. The purpose and audience are compatible to the goals of art education.
8. Support and recognition are given to all participants without exploitation.
9. Qualified judges select work based upon published criteria.
10. Participation is optional for students.
11. Prior parental permission is obtained for release, publication, and reproduction of student names and artwork.

Contests and competitions in art are **desirable** in cases where:

- The nature and purposes are compatible with the standards of a comprehensive art education and the goals and objectives of the school's art education program.
- The topic has educational value and meets the needs, interests, and concerns of the learners and teachers.
- The display of student work demonstrates the instruction, standards, thought processes, and creative problem solving strategies involved in artistic learning.

National Art Education Association

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- Students can participate in the contest or competition in a variety of roles other than making art, including setting up the display or acting as jurors, judges or docents.
- Recognition is given to all children whose work is submitted at the school level as well as those selected for final competition.
- Opportunity is provided for public recognition for the quality work produced by children under the tutelage of a qualified art teacher.
- Art teachers are given an opportunity to provide feedback to the sponsor and to positively influence future contest initiatives by community groups. There are alternatives to contests; art teachers need to be vocal and willing to work with the community to find other avenues to support both the needs of the community and the educational interests of their students.
- Qualified art teachers are provided an opportunity by the initiating agency to participate in the planning and development of the contest or competition.

Contests and competition in art are **undesirable** in cases where:

- One student or one artwork is singled out as being intrinsically superior over another, especially at the elementary level. This is counter to the belief that art education should be directed toward developing the creative potential of a wide spectrum of student capabilities.
- Standardization of skill or technique is specified or encouraged. This practice limits student expression instead of developing diversity of expression.
- Artistic expression is compromised, and students, as well as teachers, are exploited by the interests of the sponsors. This is counter to the belief that effective instruction is based upon the needs, interests, and purposes of learners and teachers along with local, state, and national art curricula and standards.
- Participation and completion requires too much instructional time. Many students, especially at the elementary level, often meet once a week, or less, for art instruction. Diverting this precious instructional time may not be in the best educational interest of the students.

Adoption: Adopted by NAEA Board of Directors, March, 2001, Motion #15

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