

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT in the Visual Arts

How do we know what constitutes excellence? When we look at student artwork in relation to the benchmarks and indicators we can assess student progress and achievement.



The samples of work by New York City public school students that follow were selected through a collaborative process by a group of arts administrators, college art educators, and art teachers.* They reflect student achievement in each medium for each of the benchmark grades--2, 5, 8, and 12.



What makes a drawing?

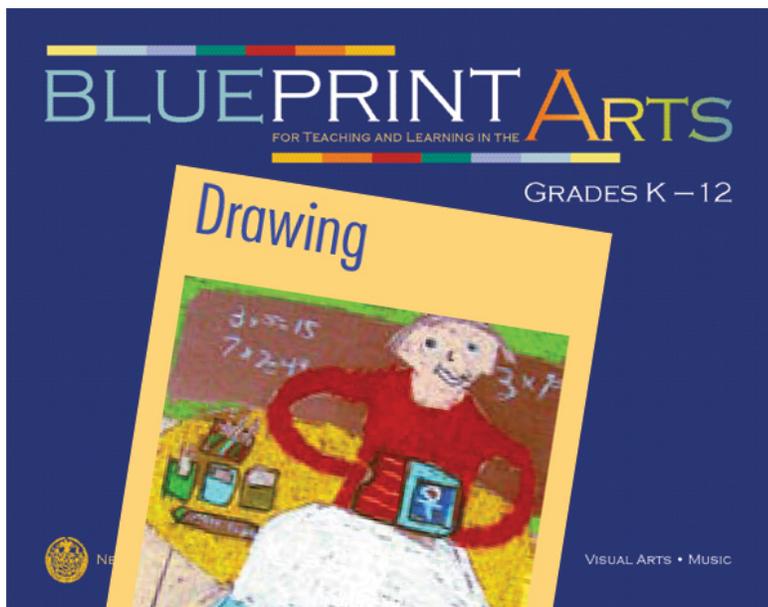
Traditionally, drawing has been defined as marks made on a two-dimensional surface. However, contemporary artists have now broadened our definition of drawing. For example, Anthony Gormely draws with a single strand of aluminum rod approximately one inch square and nearly three miles long;

Howardena Pindell draws in mixed media--cardboard, photographs, post cards, and fabric.

Drawing can be a purely aesthetic activity. It can also be a language, a primary mode of knowing and representing the world. Unfortunately, most children in this country have given up on drawing by the time they are eight years old because they have little experience communicating without words or they are frustrated when they can't get what they want to draw "just right" (Gardner, 1980). If we believe that drawing can play a vital role in our lives from early childhood to old age, then we must consider how children and adolescents develop artistically in light of current research in the field as well as the variety of personal, socioeconomic, and cultural experiences that are represented in our schools. Such considerations can guide our thinking about the ways that students become skilled or literate in the medium and language we call drawing. Drawing should be a basic, expressive tool that our students use for personal expression, communication, and aesthetic pleasure. We, as art educators, are in a unique position to provide them with that tool, empowering them to navigate the visual culture of the twenty-first century.

What follows are examples of student work that successfully demonstrate learning in drawing. We hope that they will generate an extended dialogue and assist students and teachers in assessing their progress as they work toward producing their own exemplary work. We encourage art teachers to submit their students' drawings with a discussion of how these works demonstrate achievement of the benchmarks and indicators. Submissions may be sent to artsandspecialprojects@nycboe.net.

* Special thanks to the Exemplar Committee: Barbara Gurr, Director of Visual Arts, New York City Department of Education; Linda Louis, Brooklyn College; Karen Rosner, New York City Department of Education; Amy Brook Snider, Pratt Institute; Rose Viggiano, School of Visual Arts; Andrea Zakin, Lehman College.



WHAT SHOULD STUDENTS KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO IN DRAWING?

Grade 2 Benchmark: Through an exploration of art materials and techniques, students exercise imagination, construct meanings, and depict their experiences; work in two-dimensional and three-dimensional art forms, use basic art tools, and gain knowledge of media and compositional elements.

Indicators: Create a drawing that demonstrates:

- Experimentation with various drawing tools such as oil pastels, pencils, crayons
- Use of color to convey expression



Morning Traffic, Ink and Oil Pastel, 18" X 24"

Isaiah Keene

Age 7, Grade 2
P.S./I.S. 266, Region 3, Queens

How does this drawing reflect the Grade 2 Benchmark?

"Morning Traffic" was selected because it demonstrates success in the following ways:

Experimentation with Various Drawing Media

Manipulation of ink and oil pastel results in the discovery of different effects: lines, blocks of colors, blended colors.

Use of Color for Expressive Effect

- Energy and movement are conveyed through the bold use of color, gesture, and texture.
- Emphasis and contrast are achieved by laying down large areas of color punctuated by smaller shapes and contour lines.

Understanding of Compositional Elements

- Picture plane is unified through the repetition of shapes.
- Unity is also achieved through the inclusion of strong horizontal bands.
- The multiple base lines suggest an understanding of spatial organization.

Exploration of Space

- Near and far are suggested by objects that change size as they recede.

Drawing as Self Expression

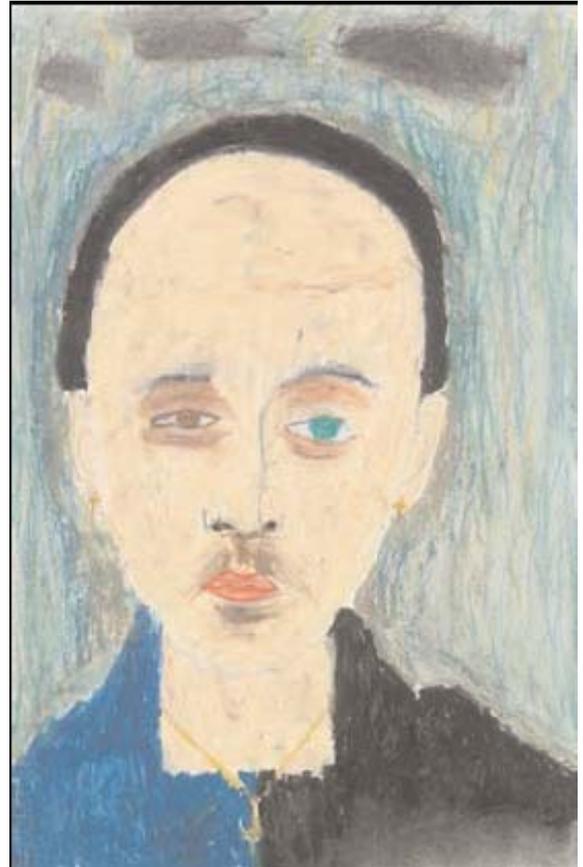
- The work is informed by a personal experience.
- The student formulates a visual problem and provides a solution.

WHAT SHOULD STUDENTS KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO IN DRAWING?

Grade 5 Benchmark: Students begin sequential unit projects; extend knowledge of art media and compositional and design elements; choose new ways of using familiar tools and materials, and deepen imaginative capacities, observational and expressive skills.

Indicators: Create drawings that demonstrate

- Volume
- Proportion
- Control of soft pencil, charcoal, crayon, pastel



Man Starting A New Life, Oil Pastel, 11" X 18"

Steven Rodriguez

Age 11, Grade 5,
P.S. 204 Morris Heights, Region 1, Bronx

How does this drawing reflect the grade 5 benchmark?

"Man Starting a New Life" was selected because it demonstrates success in the following ways:

Rendering of Volume

- The edges of shape function as lines which suggest three dimensionality.
- Shading around the eyes and mouth adds to volume.

Understanding Proportion

- Placement of features indicates knowledge of facial proportions.
- The head is in proportion to upper torso.

Control of Medium

- Oil pastels are used to create lines, blocks of color, and color blending.
- Features are rendered with attention to details.

Understanding of Compositional and Design Elements

Through the cropping and placement of the figure, the artist draws the viewer into the work.

Depth of Imaginative Capacities

- The different treatment of the left and right sides of the face and torso convey a sense of dissonance.
- The treatment of the background reinforces the feeling of ambiguity.

Evidence of Observational and Expressive Skills

The delicate rendering of ears, eyes, and jewelry indicates careful observation and contributes to a compelling portrait.

WHAT SHOULD STUDENTS KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO IN DRAWING?

Grade 8 Benchmark: Through close observation and sustained investigation, students develop individual and global perspectives on art; utilize the principles of art, solve design problems, and explore perspective, scale and point of view.

Indicators: Create a pencil, conte, or pen and ink drawing that demonstrates:

- perspective
- observation of detail
- scale of objects and figures
- a wide range of values
- a personal view



UNTITLED, Charcoal, 18" X 24"

AMY LU

Age 13, Grade 5

PS/MS 126, Manhattan Academy of Technology, Region 9

How does this drawing reflect the Grade 8 Benchmark?

Amy Lu's drawing was selected because it demonstrates success in the following ways:

Observation of Detail

- Rendering of details demonstrates close observation.
- The focus on the face and upper body supports the idea of a person deep in thought; This attitude is reinforced by the placement of the hand and set of the eyes.

Exploration of Scale

- Figurative elements are in proportion, supporting a realistic approach.

Evidence of a Wide Range of Values

- Use of shading adds to expressive quality and creates sense of volume.
- The depiction of the light source is achieved through the skillful use of charcoal medium.

Expression of a Personal View

- The depiction of the figure as contemplative and introspective enhances the subjective qualities of this portrait.

Solution of Design Problems

- Aesthetic decisions were made regarding how much information to share with viewer, and how much to omit.
- The artist invites the viewer to complete the work of art.
- Placement of the figure draws the viewer's attention to the subject.

WHAT SHOULD STUDENTS KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO IN DRAWING?

Grade 12 Benchmark: In a three-year major art sequence students master various materials and techniques to develop a portfolio that reflects a personal style and the awareness of the power of art to illuminate, inform, and influence opinion.

Indicators: Create a portfolio that demonstrates:

- *variety of drawing techniques such as line and contour, value*
- *variety of drawing materials and tools such as pencil, pen, charcoal, pastel*
- *a personal style*



UNTITLED

Work in a portfolio submitted for consideration of the Dedalus/Rothko Scholarships

How does this drawing reflect the Grade 12 Benchmark?

This drawing was selected because it demonstrates success in the following ways:

Application of drawing techniques

- Subtle graduation of light and shadow suggests volume.
- Placement of objects over a deeply shaded ground suggests depth.
- Variety of tonal coloration within the monochromatic composition creates interest, and serves to unify the picture plane.
- The rough texture of the twisted rope is contrasted with the smoother, cooler surfaces of the metal and glass objects.

Exploration of drawing materials

One drawing material is used in a variety of ways to achieve a range of effects, thus highlighting the richness of the medium and the student's skill in its employment.

Evidence of a personal style

- A dramatic effect is created by the unusual point of view in the composition; the viewer is peering down on the objects.
- The juxtaposition of the linearity of the pipes and the curves of the rope creates another type of contrast, further demonstrating the artist's interest in surface variation.
- The unusual combination of objects demonstrates a more individual approach to the subject of still life.
- The awareness of the power of art to inform is demonstrated in the artist's interest in having the viewer rethink the definition of traditional still life.