

# PRINCE Leadership MONTHLY



December, 2016

## The Arts and Assessment

LaMurl Morris  
Fine Arts Director

Often the arts are viewed very subjectively—through one's own viewpoint; however, there are many ways to view the arts objectively. In each discipline in the arts, there are fundamental skills one must possess to grow artistically and creatively. For example, for a trumpet player to excel in his playing, he must know fingering for notes, be able to play scales, read rhythms accurately, and play in tune with other musicians. A teacher can assess the accuracy of these skills based upon expectations of that skill level.

As a fine arts department at Prince Avenue Christian School, we decided to divide our assessments into three categories—classwork & quizzes, participation, and performance/project. The performance/project category is the culmination of skills learned in class and in rehearsal. In the performing arts class and band class, the performance grade is the concert grade. In the art class, the project grade is based on the completed project, such as a piece of pottery or a drawing. This grade is worth 40% of the student's grade. The classwork grade may consist of sketchbook grades, notebook checks, playing scales, sight-singing, etc. Participation grades are based on class discussions, work executed with other classmates, or students working together as an ensemble. These grades may cover such topics as sectional rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and class discussions about topics relevant to skills that students are learning. Both the classwork and participation grades are weighted at 30% each.

At Prince Avenue Christian School, the arts curriculum is based on national and state standards; therefore, assessments are linked to the curriculum. The skill and performance expectations of a beginning band student would be vastly different than that of a student who has been playing their instrument for seven years. The skill level of a beginning printmaking student would be different than an



honors level student. Through years of research, national and state standards provide guidelines for assessments.

In band and performing arts, our ensembles are assessed at music festivals and competitions. When we travel to Disney World, Universal Studios, New York City, and other locations, our students perform for adjudication or we must meet certain criteria to be invited to perform. In the fall our cast of *Into the Woods* was critiqued by a statewide panel of judges. These opportunities provide valuable insight for us as teachers and for our students.

All of our fine arts teachers earned degrees in our disciplines, while many hold master's level or higher degrees. We have experienced assessment firsthand through the completion of recitals, portfolios, projects, performances, and shows.

Education, experience, research, adjudication, and curriculum are all components of effective and beneficial assessment.