

## Best Practices for Integrating Essentials Curriculum with Common Core

Adobe Youth Voices Essentials media making curriculum aligns with the direction the Common Core State Standards is providing for the country. Like Adobe Youth Voices, the Common Core State Standards drive instruction to higher order thinking and doing skills. In addition, the Understanding by Design process coupled with the Common Core State Standards place the focus on teachers developing highly engaging learning experiences to support higher order learning.

Meeting the Common Core Standards is not about retro-fitting lessons, but about developing a road map of what you want to teach – with stopping places for students to demonstrate their understandings through learning performances. As with the Adobe Youth Voices Essentials curriculum, addressing the Common Core Standards is an opportunity to really drill down to what you want your students to understand and learn. Adobe Youth Voices Essentials curriculum charts a path for facilitating a more student-centered learning experience, which calibrates with best practices for working with the Common Core Standards.

Adobe Youth Voices partner schools are adopting Common Core Standards, like many school systems nationwide. An administrator from a partner school regards the adoption of Common Core Standards as a great opportunity. It is “the what” we are teaching, but media making can be “the how.” The administrator advises that educators unpack the standards, rather than think strictly in terms of alignment. Start curriculum planning with the end in mind, following, for example, the Understanding by Design framework developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe. In order to arrive at the knowledge and understanding articulated in the standards, contemplate the activities and products students should complete as part of their learning process along the way. Thinking through the entire process and what will count as adequate demonstrations of learning prompts educators to truly understand what students need to know in order to fulfill the standards, rather than just understanding the standards.

Best practices for effectively integrating Adobe Youth Voices Essentials curriculum with Common Core Standards are organized into the following three important dimensions:

- Inquiry
- Collaboration
- Authentic Assessment

## **Inquiry**

Utilizing Adobe Youth Voices Essentials curriculum engages students in achieving the Common Core Standards in a creative and challenging way. The explicit design of the curriculum to support creating with purpose drives inquiry-based learning experiences that are rigorous, collaborative, and reflective, leading to long-term often sophisticated productions – learning experiences that, moreover, promote college and career readiness. Researching a problem, articulating a point of view, developing a message, and incorporating facts and evidence in the final work, or presentation of learning, are all key facets of Adobe Youth Voices Essentials curriculum and reflect greater student ownership of their learning experience.

The production process mapped out in Adobe Youth Voices Essentials curriculum especially speaks to College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing. From the planning and collaboration stages to media viewing, Critical Response, and Rough Cut Reviews to producing, editing, and showcasing work, the curriculum provides a clear structure and valuable tools to develop the skills and understandings clarified in the writing standards. The focus on writing in grades 6-12 involves the development of narratives real and imaginative, expository, and arguments. An educator involved with Adobe Youth Voices advises that teachers who combine these kinds of writing assignments with an Adobe Youth Voices project or process would be able to meet the Production and Distribution of Writing Standards at a very high level.

Integral to creating with purpose is the process of defining the target audience and crafting a message that will resonate with this audience. Collaborating, synthesizing and communicating complex ideas, revising (i.e., via Rough Cut Reviews), and formulating context-appropriate arguments while strategically employing digital media, are all fundamental to the creative and production process described in Adobe Youth Voices Essentials curriculum, and substantially address the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening.

### *Best Practices:*

- *Create opportunities for students to take ownership of the learning process by requiring them to pose their own questions, research and develop their own theories, and conceptualize their own media project.*
- *Challenge students with prompt questions and press them to go deeper in their exploration of their chosen subject to really uncover the issues.*
- *Guide students through the production process with diligent focus on the message they have articulated and the audience they are targeting.*

## Collaboration

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the Adobe Youth Voices Essentials curriculum, it is ideally implemented by teachers from different subject areas working in collaboration with each other. The value of working together as a team, bringing different perspectives, leverages the rich opportunities that the curriculum poses for inquiry and exploration that spans disciplines. To surface and build cross-curricular connections, teachers can partner with other teachers at a school site to brainstorm, plan, and share in creating parts of a production.

An Adobe Youth Voices media arts educator has discussed working very closely with English teachers on connecting the writing assignments in English class with the pre-production work required for all of the video and animation projects developed in his classroom. For instance, students learn how to write stage plays, then scripts, and their Adobe Youth Voices projects can address and incorporate many of the approaches to writing outlined in the standards. An example of an interdisciplinary project developed by a media arts and a history teacher, History Cards, is included in this toolkit.

A collaboration around a media project should begin with a discussion about the skills and understandings, such as those reflected in the relevant Common Core Standards, that the teachers expect their students to attain. Throughout the duration of the project, this collaboration continues, with teachers taking time to reflect on their students' progress, to revisit what was decided in terms of adequate evidence of understanding, and to collaboratively develop assessments such as a rubric for the final media work.

### *Best Practices:*

- *Partner with other teachers at your school site to plan and take on different facets of a production in order to make cross-curricular connections.*
- *Seek out ways to highlight the cross-curricular connections students experience in the learning process, to emphasize the multidisciplinary nature of inquiry and promote expansive, not narrow thinking and exploration.*
- *Identify the skills and understandings each teacher needs to prioritize as outcomes for the interdisciplinary project, and work together in the early stages of collaboration to develop appropriate ways to assess these learning outcomes.*

## Authentic Assessment

What makes assessment authentic is when student performance is directly evaluated for understanding *in context*, through multiple tasks or demonstrations of learning. Authentic assessment measures student performance in the course of their learning experience, not as an isolated task separate from the projects they are engaged in. Crafting assessments that are authentic, that capture evidence of understanding, is easier when writing, media works, presentations, and various other demonstrations of learning are integral to the curriculum, as is the case with Adobe Youth Voices Essentials.

The Adobe Youth Voices production process cultivates student ownership of their learning experience and demands accountability, if students are to see their project through to completion. There are opportunities for assessment – and for different kinds of assessment, such as written work and revisions, project pitch and other oral presentations, fact gathering and analysis, media showcase, self-assessment, etc. – at many different intervals throughout the production process.

Identifying opportunities for assessment, and, in fact, building them into the curriculum from the very beginning is a hallmark of the Understanding by Design framework and backward design approach developed by educators Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe. They explain their Stages of Design as follows:

- “Identify desired results – What is the complex learning goal/standard?
- Determine acceptable evidence – What transfer evidence is implied in the goal/standard? What *specific* “performance” will provide such evidence?
- Plan learning experiences and instruction – What follows for learning activities that would equip learners to perform?” (Wiggins, 2004).

For more information see [this presentation by Wiggins](#).

Included in this toolkit is a worksheet with prompts designed to support you in creating rigorous media making experiences that connect to the Common Core. Consider using the Common Core Planning Tool to help clarify your thinking about how to address the standards, and to guide assessment of student performance throughout the production process. In particular, note that rubrics can be among the most effective tools to measure student learning, especially in the context of a creative process that yields a variety of outputs, like the Adobe Youth Voices Essentials media making curriculum. This toolkit includes examples of Common Core Standards-linked lesson plans and rubrics for reference.

*Best Practices:*

- *Start lesson planning with the end in mind – work backwards from the understandings, such as those represented by the standards, you want students to attain.*
- *Take advantage of opportunities for assessment that naturally occur as part of the production process – in other words, embed assessments in the pre-production stage, production work, and exhibition activities.*
- *Be clear about what reveals evidence of understanding and look for it in student writing, media works, and other presentations of learning. Seek clarity on acceptable evidence based on the standards.*

Tools and resources that support authentic assessment, inquiry, and collaboration in connection with fulfilling Common Core Standards follow in the remainder of this toolkit.