# 2026 Exemplary Arts Education Award Sample Application

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**Application Due Date:**

**December 21, 2025, by 11:59 p.m.**

Administered by the:

California Department of Education

Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division

1430 N Street, Suite 3207

Sacramento, CA 95814

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## Table of Contents

[Exemplary Arts Education Award 2026 1](#_Toc184650741)

[Table of Contents 2](#_Toc184650742)

[Overview 3](#_Toc184650743)

[Application Procedures and Processes 3](#_Toc184650744)

[Eligibility Requirements 3](#_Toc184650745)

[Application Timeline 4](#_Toc184650746)

[Application Components 4](#_Toc184650747)

[Submission Procedures and Application Components 4](#_Toc184650748)

[Incomplete and Late Applications 4](#_Toc184650749)

[Sample Application 5](#_Toc184650750)

[Part 1: School Overview 5](#_Toc184650751)

[Part 2: Eligibility 5](#_Toc184650752)

[Part 3: Theme A––Program Administration and Accountability 5](#_Toc184650753)

[Part 4: Theme B––Program Development and Growth 6](#_Toc184650754)

[Part 5: Theme C––Program Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment 7](#_Toc184650755)

## Overview

The California Exemplary Arts Education Award (EAEA) acknowledges individual school sites who demonstrate a commitment to sustained access and equity to standards-aligned arts education programs to all students they serve.

The EAEA showcases recipient schools’ exemplary arts education programs and practices which have contributed to their success based on the themes listed below:

Theme A––Program Administration and Accountability

Theme B––Program Development and Growth

Theme C––Program Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

EAEA recipients serve as model arts programs for the California Department of Education (CDE) for two academic years. A full outline of the application and award timeline are detailed below.

Interested eligible schools must submit a completed EAEA application via online application process by 11:59 p.m. on December 21, 2025.

Email questions to [exemplaryartsawards@cde.ca.gov](mailto:exemplaryartsawards@cde.ca.gov).

## Application Procedures and Processes

### Eligibility Requirements

California elementary, middle, and high schools, including direct-funded charter schools, juvenile court and community schools, and alternative schools of choice, may apply. Please note that this is a school-based award; districts may not apply. Additionally, any applicant must certify and provide select evidence in the application that their school:

* offers instruction in a minimum of three arts disciplines (dance, media arts, music, theatre, and/or visual arts) during the regular school day through standards-based arts integration taught by a credentialed/qualified instructor;
* can demonstrate that ALL populations have equal opportunities to access these programs;
* offers educational programs or arts education curriculum and instruction aligned to the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted *California Arts Standards for Public Schools, Prekindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (*CA Arts Standards*); and
* has cleared for use any student images and likeness included in the submission.

Once these certifications are made, the school may then proceed to complete and submit the full application.

### Application Timeline

| Date | Activity |
| --- | --- |
| May 1, 2025 | 2026 EAEA online application opens for submissions |
| December 21, 2025 | Applications must be submitted to the CDE, by 11:59 p.m. Pacific Standard Time (PST) |
| January–March 2026 | CDE reviews and scores of applications |
| March 2026 | Exemplary Arts Education Awardees Announced |
| May 2026 | Award Ceremony |

### Application Components

Part 1: School Overview

Part 2: Eligibility Confirmation

Part 3: Theme A––Program Administration and Accountability

Part 4: Theme B––Program Development and Growth

Part 5: Theme C––Program Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

### Submission Procedures and Application Components

Applicants shall submit the full EAEA application via an online application link which can be found on the EAEA web page.

### Incomplete and Late Applications

Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

## Sample Application

\*This is solely for review.

### Part 1: School Overview

1. Name of School
2. District
3. County-District-School (CDS) Code
4. Name of Principal
5. Primary EAEA Application Point of Contact
6. Phone number
7. Email Address

### Part 2: Eligibility

* By checking the box, the applicant school certifies that they offer instruction in a minimum of three arts disciplines (dance, media arts, music, theatre, and/or visual arts) during the regular school day through standards-based arts integration taught by a credentialed/qualified instructor.

Please select any/all art disciplines that are taught and available to all students:

* + - Dance
    - Media Arts
    - Music
    - Theater
    - Visual Arts
* By checking the box, the applicant school certifies that they can demonstrate that ALL populations have equal opportunities to access these programs.
* By checking the box, the applicant school certifies that they offer educational programs or arts education curriculum and instruction aligned to the SBE-adopted *CA Arts Standards*.
* By checking the box, the applicant school certifies any student images and likeness included in the submission have been cleared for use.

### Part 3: Theme A––Program Administration and Accountability

For each of the sub-themes below, provide a brief narrative (1,000 or less characters) and a minimum of one piece of supporting evidence of how your school demonstrates a commitment to providing high-quality, adequate resources and funding for arts education for ALL students. While some suggestions of sample evidence are provided, this is not an exhaustive list. Evidence must be submitted as a functional URL with viewing access provided. Theme A has a total possible score of 15 points, each sub-theme is worth a total of 3 points. Evidence must be submitted as a functional URL with viewing access provided.

Sample Evidence:Language showing arts education prioritized in the Local Control and Accountability Plan (highlighted sections), strategic arts plans, number of credentialed arts specialists on staff, master schedule, budgetary documents, course enrollment, etc.

| **Code** | **Sub-Theme Description** | **Narrative Score (0–2)** | **Evidence Score (0–1)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **A.I** | Demonstrate that there is a broad selection of Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) courses offered in a minimum of three disciplines. | 0–2/2 | 0–1/1 |
| **A.II** | Demonstrate that adequate time is allocated and protected in the schedule to ensure access to VAPA instruction for all students in all identified arts disciplines. | 0–2/2 | 0–1/1 |
| **A.III** | Demonstrate that appropriately credentialed arts teachers/teacher leaders teach the arts. | 0–2/2 | 0–1/1 |
| **A.IV** | Demonstrate how the school budget ensures adequate access to quality materials, equipment, space, and technology for all arts instruction. | 0–2/2 | 0–1/1 |
| **A.V** | Demonstrate ways the entire school community is engaged with the VAPA program, including how they support the academic value, career connections, and creative expression opportunities for students provided by the VAPA program. | 0–2/2 | 0–1/1 |

### Part 4: Theme B––Program Development and Growth

For each of the sub-themes below, provide a brief narrative (1,000 or less characters) and a minimum of one piece of supporting evidence of how your school demonstrates a commitment to maintaining and expanding a high-quality arts program through both teacher professional learning and programmatic planning. Consider––what does your art program look like today versus the past? While some suggestions of sample evidence are provided, this is not an exhaustive list. Evidence must be submitted as a functional URL with viewing access provided. Theme B has a total possible score of 15 points, each sub-theme is worth a total of 3 points. Evidence must be submitted as a functional URL with viewing access provided.

Sample Evidence:Evidence can include specific strategic arts plans, conferences and trainings offered to teachers, arts integration training, participation in communities of practice, summer externships, professional development evaluations, etc.

| **Code** | **Sub-Theme Description** | **Narrative Score (0–2)** | **Evidence Score (0–1)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **B.I** | Demonstrate that the school has a strategic plan for implementing effective arts education aligned to the *CA Arts Standards* | 0–2/2 | 0–1/1 |
| **B.II** | Demonstrate the process for revising the strategic arts plan based on multiple indicators, including arts assessments, stakeholder surveys of needs, community input, and involve arts and non-arts teachers. | 0–2/2 | 0–1/1 |
| **B.III** | Demonstrate that teachers regularly collaborate to ensure that the curriculum and instruction are aligned with the *CA Arts Standards* | 0–2/2 | 0–1/1 |
| **B.IV** | Demonstrate that the professional learning opportunities provided are research-based information on current arts issues and strategies, school-based student art learning data, and connected to student needs. | 0–2/2 | 0–1/1 |
| **B.V** | Demonstrate how recent federal/state/private funding opportunities have improved your arts program (for example, Arts, Music, and Instructional Materials; Proposition 28; private grants; etc.). | 0–2/2 | 0–1/1 |

### Part 5: Theme C––Program Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

In a brief narrative, explain how your school demonstrates a commitment to high-quality arts curriculum, instruction, and assessment aligned to the California state standards. While some suggestions of sample evidence are provided, this is not an exhaustive list. Evidence must be submitted as a functional URL with viewing access provided. Theme C has a total possible score of 15 points, each sub-theme is worth a total of 3 points. Evidence must be submitted as a functional URL with viewing access provided.

Sample Evidence: Evidence can include standards-aligned lesson plans and student work samples, videos of standards-aligned student performances, student exhibitions, standards-aligned rubrics and student work samples, examples of portfolio or project-based assessments, etc.

| **Code** | **Sub-Theme Description** | **Narrative Score (0–2)** | **Evidence Score (0–1)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **C.I** | Demonstrate that the implemented curricula are aligned with the *CA Arts Standards* and allow the students to learn to utilize developmentally appropriate, discipline-specific arts vocabulary in oral and written peer reviews and critiques to evaluate each other’s work. | 0–2/2 | 0–1/1 |
| **C.II** | Demonstrate how teachers integrate authentic and curriculum-aligned arts resources (i.e., virtual resources, use of technology in art making or presenting art works, community artists’ residencies, field trips, etc.) into the program offerings. | 0–2/2 | 0–1/1 |
| **C.III** | Demonstrate how the curriculum promotes the regular and inclusive student performances, demonstrations, and productions, including student-initiated projects | 0–2/2 | 0–1/1 |
| **C.IV** | Demonstrate the standards-based guidelines and tools teachers use for formative and summative assessments in all provided arts disciplines as a regular part of instruction and planning. | 0–2/2 | 0–1/1 |
| **C.V** | Demonstrate teachers regularly provide students with authentic, meaningful feedback in arts learning, and provide students with tools for establishing further learning goals. | 0–2/2 | 0–1/1 |

California Department of Education, December 2024