



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Through the art program of Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose schools, students will:

- explore the diversity that comes with art,
- develop the transferable skills of risk taking, critical thinking and problem solving,
- express ideas and emotions with various media,
- work through the design process,
- make interdisciplinary connections,
- collaborate, think critically and communicate.

Art education is a pivotal part of a holistic education. Art is offered at every building in the district in different ways. Access to this instruction is essential for social - emotional health and critical thinking skills. There are art instructors at two out of the six elementary schools, one at the middle school, and two at the high school level.

Visual art in the BHM School District is offered in grades 6 - 12. At Buffalo Community Middle School, grade 6 STEAM art and grade 7 art is required. There are also Art electives offered to eighth grade students. Electives at BCMS are 2D and 3D Art. At Buffalo High School one credit in the arts is required for graduation. This can come from music, theater, or visual arts. Students can elect to take the following courses in visual art:

Art Foundations

Ceramics I, II, III

Drawing I, II

Drawing II

Painting I, II

Online Intro to Visual Arts

STATE STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS

Students enrolled at BCMS must be offered at least three and required to meet state standards in two arts areas. These areas include Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theater, and Visual Arts. At the high school level, students must earn one arts credit sufficient to satisfy all the state arts standards. Students must be offered at least three and required to meet standards in at least one arts area.

The Minnesota State Standards in the Arts were updated in 2018, prompting educators to adapt their instruction to meet the revised benchmarks. To effectively address these standards, teachers often bundle multiple benchmarks into each unit, creating cohesive and comprehensive learning experiences. Through the use of rubrics and checklists, students are given the flexibility to demonstrate their understanding in a variety of ways. This approach emphasizes mastery through process, encouraging exploration and growth rather than focusing solely on the final product.

BHM EVIDENCE OF ACHIEVEMENT

The Visual Art program for grades 6–12 emphasizes a process-based approach to learning, focusing on the development of creative thinking and problem-solving skills. Assessment is rooted in the artistic process rather than solely the final product, encouraging students to explore, reflect, and revise throughout their work.

Each unit at the middle and high school levels includes a summative assessment that evaluates both the design process and the completed artwork, providing a comprehensive view of student learning. The design cycle is flexible and continuously restructured based on student input and understanding, allowing the curriculum to adapt to the needs and voices of the learners.

The Buffalo High School Visual Art program was featured on KARE 11, for its unique approach to combining creativity with community impact. The segment highlighted how students are using their artistic talents to raise money for charitable causes, while also learning about and supporting artists with disabilities—helping to create more inclusive opportunities in the art world.

A key part of the program involves high school ceramics students working alongside elementary students, applying their skills in unpredictable, real-world ways as they collaborate on meaningful projects. The funds raised through this initiative not only support charitable giving, but also help provide students with the opportunity to host their own art show. This powerful program brings K–12 students

together, fostering connection, creativity, and a shared passion for art education across grade levels.

STATE AND NATIONAL TRENDS

Visual art education is undergoing significant shifts both statewide and nationally. One major development is the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) as a creative tool. Educators are teaching students to use AI thoughtfully—enhancing, not replacing, original creativity—while approaching its use with caution.

Instructional models are also evolving. While Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) once dominated, many programs are now moving toward Teaching for Artistic Behavior (TAB), emphasizing student choice and ownership. This shift reflects a broader trend of fostering creativity and independence in young artists.

Professional development through the Curriculum Improvement Process (CIP) supports these changes, offering opportunities for teachers to collaborate, update instructional practices, and integrate new tools like AI while keeping student creativity at the center.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

The Visual Arts program within BHM Schools is built on a foundation of flexibility, expertise, and a deep commitment to student growth. There are a wide range of options available to students, allowing them to explore various art and dive deeply into personal interests. This flexibility is made possible by faculty who are practicing artists themselves.

The program also fosters a healthy and inclusive creative environment by emphasizing that perfection is not the goal - growth, experimentation, and expression are. Students are encouraged to take risks and reflect on their processes, which supports both technical skills and self-awareness. As a result, BHM's art spaces have become key areas for social-emotional learning, offering students a safe place to explore identity, manage stress, and build confidence through creative work.

The Visual Arts program has produced a remarkable number of professional artists, including teachers, glassblowers, ceramicists, and illustrators, many of whom credit their early exposure in BHM schools for sparking their passion. With its dynamic curriculum, expert faculty, and a commitment to whole-student development the program continues to be a standout offering within the district.

PROGRAM LIMITATIONS OR CHALLENGES

The visual art programs at Buffalo Community Middle School and Buffalo High School face challenges including staff and course reductions, limiting student access to a full range of art experiences. Student engagement has declined, with many choosing other electives over art. Limited resources and outdated materials further restrict creative opportunities. Additionally, the arts often struggle for recognition alongside core academic subjects, requiring continued advocacy for their value.

NEXT STEPS

The next steps for the Visual Arts team include pursuing professional development focused on strengthening the ceramics program by exploring successful models at other schools. Additionally, the team plans to visit an AVID site to observe how AVID strategies are integrated into visual art classrooms, supporting student engagement and learning. These actions aim to guide future improvements and align the program with best practices.