



The Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency (aka The Arts Seal) - an outline for mentoring the student through the Arts Seal process

This is a condensed outline for supporting students through the Arts Seal process - designed to simplify what can feel to be overwhelming. It does not attempt to respond to every situation. That is hopefully the job of the **Arts Seal QuickNotes Guide**, which is required reading for the Arts Seal student.

In considering the TUSD Fine and Performing Arts Department's administration of the Arts Seal, which can seem overly dense, it is well to consider it is the result of developing guidelines and instructions that have evolved over the past seven years to accommodate the wide diversity of our students' fine arts capstone projects across five artistic disciplines.

If at any time, you have questions or concerns, feel free to contact me:

thomas.lewis@tusd1.org

Or if you need a quick answer, my phone number is always at the bottom of my email signature: 520-981-2841

Call Monday through Friday, unless I am in meeting or driving, I will pick up.

The Arizona State Seal of Arts Proficiency is commonly known as The Arts Seal and will be referred to as such in this document.

Description: Just as athletic excellence is awarded with a varsity letter, the Arts Seal recognizes artistic excellence in graduating high school seniors.

The Award includes:

- Embossed seal on diploma
- Fine arts honor cord to proudly wear at graduation
- Transcript notation
- Pride in achievement

[Students who earn the Arts Seal, gain acceptance to the University of Arizona School of Music and matriculate as music majors may be eligible for a Fine Arts Tuition Award of \$1000, subject to available funds. The award may be renewable annually providing the student remains in good standing.]

The responsibility of a teacher who is mentoring their students through the Arts Seal process . . .

In consideration of how busy fine arts teachers are, let's first consider the student responsibilities - it is important the student be aware of these.

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Student Responsibilities:

- To acquaint themselves with the Arts Seal process -
Read pages 2 through 14 of the *Arts Seal QuickNotes Guide*, and the Guidelines for their Artistic Discipline, also in the *QuickNotes*.
- Be aware of and fulfill the 4 requirements for earning the Arts Seal and meet the 2 deadlines.

The 4 Requirements (details on page 3 & 4):

1. Academic Requirement
2. Arts Extracurricular Activities Requirement
3. Create a Fine Arts Capstone Project
4. Participate in an Adjudication Interview

The 2 Deadlines:

Tuesday, October 28, 2025 -

Deadline for submission of *Intent to Apply Form* (the initial application)

Hyperlink to access form:

<https://forms.office.com/r/wXAQk4n70t>

Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 11:59 pm -

Deadline to submit Fine Arts Capstone Project Materials

This is a hard deadline, late materials will not be accepted.

Materials will be uploaded via Microsoft File Request, the access link will be sent in January.

Mentor Teacher Responsibilities:

- Introduce the Arts Seal opportunity to seniors - suggest and encourage strong candidates to apply
- Inform the students of their responsibilities in the Arts Seal process - see previous page for Student Responsibilities - remind students of required reading in *The Arts Seal QuickNotes Guide*.
- Ensure that the students have access the the link for *The Intent to Apply Form*:
<https://forms.office.com/r/wXAQk4n70t>
And *The Arts Seal QuickNotes Guide*:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DOECuPhY3wY5FnPysmniObSz2614WEDO/view?usp=sharing>
- Guide students in writing a strong Capstone Project Proposal for the *Intent to Apply Form*

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- Check in regularly with the student:
 - Offer feedback
 - Help troubleshoot
 - Encourage progress
 - Or as the AZ Dept. of Education indicates in their literature, “Accountability measures must be in place to ensure students receive frequent and rigorous feedback throughout the process of completing their capstone project.”
However, as the mentor teacher knows their student best, they should decide what degree of monitoring will best suit the student.
- Attend adjudication interview to support the student.

Details of the 4 Arts Seal Qualifying Requirements -

1. Academic Requirements - by graduation, the student must have completed 4 credit hours of fine arts classes with a minimum grade of a B.

These 4 credit hours can be accrued in one of 3 ways:

4 credits in one artistic discipline (dance, music, theatre, visual arts or media arts)

OR

3 credits in one artistic discipline, and 1 credit in a second artistic discipline or a qualifying creative industries CTE class*.

OR

2 credits in one artistic discipline, and 2 credits in a second artistic discipline or qualifying creative industries CTE class*.

(1 unit in four different art forms is not acceptable.)

*** The qualifying CTE credits are listed in the middle of page 5 of the *Arts Seal QuickNotes Guide*.**

If the student is unsure of their credits, they should check with their counselor.

The Fine Arts Department will check the current transcripts of applicants in January to ensure they are on track to fulfill this requirement.

2. Arts-Related Extracurricular Activities Requirements –

By graduation: 80 hours of arts-related extracurricular activities accrued over the four years of the student’s high school career.

An arts extracurricular activity is any arts participation beyond the regularly scheduled

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school day. After school is not considered part of “the regularly scheduled school day.”

Therefore, after school rehearsals, etc. can be counted as arts extracurricular activities. These activities need not be school sponsored. Time spent working on the Arts Seal project may also be counted.

Interpretation of what constitutes an Arts Extracurricular Activity is very liberal.

A list of possible Arts Extracurricular Activities, that is neither exclusive nor exhaustive, is in the middle of page 6 of *The Arts Seal QuickNotes Guide*.

3. Creating a Fine Arts Capstone Artistic Project -

- Definition: A capstone project should be a meaningful culmination of a student’s arts learning.
- Students should be guided to plan and execute a student-led artistic project of their choice.
- **The final product should be “over and above the typical work of a high school fine arts senior.”**
- The process and experience of the capstone project should produce an “art scholar” who will be able to describe and discuss their project, process, and intentionality during an adjudication interview.

Starting at the top of page 8 in *The Arts Seal QuickNotes Guide*, there are examples, suggested by the Arizona Department of Education, of possible capstone projects. These lists are neither exhaustive nor exclusive.

Starting on page 15 are Guidelines for the Artistic Disciplines - dance, media arts, music (divided into 4 sub-categories), theatre arts, and visual arts. It is important for the student to know what will be required when it is time to submit their Capstone Project Materials.

The student only needs to read the Guidelines that pertain to their art form, not the other ones.

4. The Adjudication Interview

Student presents and discusses their project, process, and artistic intent

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The Arts Seal Timeline for Mentor and Student -

Now that there has been a brief overview of requirements, this is when it happens.

September- October: Getting Started

- The fine arts teacher will inform the students of the Arts Seal opportunity and provide interested students with access to *The Arts Seal QuickNotes Guide*:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DOECuPhY3wY5FnPysmniObSz2614WEDO/view?usp=sharing>
- Remind them of the required reading that is explained in **Red Font** in the *Guide's* Table of Contents.
- If the student has reviewed the Arts Seal QuickNotes Guide and is ready to move forward, the teacher should make sure they have access to the ***Intent to Apply Form***:
<https://forms.office.com/r/wXAQk4n70t>
- The student should familiarize themselves with the form and be sure they will be able to provide all the necessary information, particularly answering the Capstone Project Proposal.
- The student should secure a fine arts teacher to be their mentor for the Arts Seal process.
- Once a student has shaped a concept for their Fine Arts Capstone Project, they should meet with their **mentor teacher** to refine their Capstone Project Proposal:
 - ***Clarify artistic intent:*** *Can the student clearly explain what they're trying to express or explore through their work?*
 - ***Ensure alignment:*** *Does the idea meet the expectations outlined in the discipline-specific guidelines from the Arts Seal QuickNotes Guide?*
 - ***Evaluate feasibility:*** *Can the student realistically complete the project with the time, resources, and skills they have?*

Tuesday, October 28, 2025:

Deadline for submitting online *The Intent to Apply Form*

- To apply, the student should be able to attest they can meet the Academic and Arts Extracurricular Activities requirements by graduation and include a clearly articulated Capstone Project Proposal.

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- **The Capstone Project Proposal must be accepted by the Fine Arts Department for the student to proceed in the Arts Seal process.**

The student will have only one chance to submit a capstone project proposal.

If the project is rejected, the student may not reapply, and they will not be able to continue in the Arts Seal process.

- Once again, if the student or the mentor teacher are unsure of the Capstone Project Proposal or have questions, before October 28, you may contact Thomas.Lewis@tusd1.org.

By Wednesday, November 5, 2025: Proposal Decision

- Students are notified of acceptance or rejection
- Mentor teachers are copied on all emails sent to students.

From November to mid-February: Capstone Project Creation

- Student works on Capstone Project. Mentor checks in with student periodically to offer guidance and feedback.
- Final review of materials (if time permits) before submission.
Ultimately, it is the student's responsibility to properly put together their materials and meet the deadline.

Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 11:59 pm: Final Submission Deadline

- Student submits Capstone Project Materials and the Arts Extracurricular Activities Log. (Required Project Materials are explained in the *Guidelines for the Various Artistic Disciplines* in the *Arts Seal QuickNotes Guide*.)
- **Materials received past the deadline will not be accepted.**
We suggest that students plan to send your materials a few days early, so if they have a last-minute emergency/technical glitch, they will have time to address the problem.
- Materials are uploaded via Microsoft File Request.
Upload link will be sent in January

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- Early submission of projects that are completed prior to February 17 are encouraged.

Attention: For Performing Arts Students - If their project is part of a larger performance that will occur after the February 17 deadline, check the Guidelines for that particular artistic discipline in *The Arts Seal QuickNotes Guide*

Late February–Early April: Adjudication Interviews

- Zoom interview scheduled with student, mentor, and adjudication panel.
- All interviews must be completed by April 13, 2026 - the deadline TUSD Fine Arts Department submits Arts Seal report to the Arizona Department of Education.

Wednesday, April 15, 2026 (or sooner): Awards Announced

- Students are notified of adjudication results.
- Mentor teachers are copied on all emails.

Final Note: Withdrawal Policy

Each year, we have students who, for various reasons, withdraw their application for the Arts Seal. We understand that the senior year of high school can be a very busy and stressful time. Before the student decides to withdraw, they should discuss it with their mentor teacher. The decision to withdraw is a personal one that only the student can make, and we support their decision without judgement on our part and there should be no guilt on the student's part.

As a courtesy, we do ask that the student notify us of their withdrawal. Previously, we had students ghost us and time was spent attempting to contact them to ascertain if they had a problem, were not receiving our emails, or if they were, in fact, withdrawing. If we do not receive responses to our emails, or the text message prompts, we will assume the student has withdrawn and drop you from consideration.

Mentor teachers are copied on all emails.

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Once again, as you go through the process, if either student or mentor run into a problem, contact me at Thomas.Lewis@tusd1.org. We will try our best to work out a solution.

Thank you for taking the time to read this - much appreciated.