



ArtQuest

Frequently Asked Questions for School Year 2009-10 Entry

1. What is the ArtQuest Program? Initially implemented in the fall of 1994, ArtQuest is a "Secondary Specialized Program" ("SSP") on the Santa Rosa High School campus designed to provide an "above and beyond" experience for students who wish to concentrate on one of eight Arts Specialties during their high school years and for whom creativity is of paramount importance.

2. How is ArtQuest funded? Funded initially in 1993 by the Calif. Dept. of Education's "SSP" Grant, AQ is now funded by a combination of variable sources, including Santa Rosa City Schools District, parent and community fundraising and donations, and grants from individuals, "Friends of ArtQuest", SRHS Foundation, Calif. Arts Council and the Calif. Dept. of Education.

3. What Specialties can a student choose from? The eight Visual and Performing Arts Specialties offered are: Digital Arts, Photography, Video Arts, Visual Fine Arts, Dance, Theatre Arts, Instrumental Music and Vocal Music.

4. What does each Specialty offer? Specialties are individually described in the ArtQuest Curriculum Summary found in the AQ Application Packet. A brief summary of this information is also contained in the SRHS Course Catalogue.

5. In general, what can I expect from ArtQuest? You can expect to find students in your arts area who are passionate about their art form and love what they do, just as you do, you can expect to be taught by Arts Specialists who are dedicated to their art and expect you to do your best work, and you will find the AQ Core-related classes to be challenging and of high quality. You will also learn about many arts and art-related careers but, if you change your mind, you will also find that other doors will be open and that the skills, experiences, focus and discipline you develop in AQ will translate easily and powerfully to many other areas.

6. How many students attend the ArtQuest program? There are about 575 AQ students, about 28% of SRHS's students.

7. What are some of the guiding principles of ArtQuest? Some of AQ's guiding ideas include an awareness that there are many students who are talented and motivated to succeed in the Visual and Performing Arts and that they can benefit from having an opportunity to develop their interests in a challenging and supportive community during high school. AQ also understands that there are many "ways of knowing" and that by supporting diverse learning styles and encouraging a variety of modes of expressing experience and knowledge, we add depth, richness and meaning to education, our lives and culture. The program embraces the idea that creative problem solving, critical thinking and judgment skills, tolerance of ambiguity, divergent perspectives and collaborations are all learned about extremely well through the Arts and can be transferred successfully to most other areas of education and life. There is also a conviction that there is a major difference between "high standards" and "standardized" and that by teaching, modeling and *expecting* and *supporting* high level technical and conceptual accomplishment, focused discipline and positive risk-taking, students will be inspired and empowered to pursue lifelong learning and to achieve at exceptional levels in many areas.

8. What are the entrance requirements for ArtQuest? See the detailed information in the AQ Application Packet.

9. How much does ArtQuest cost to attend? ArtQuest is a public school program and thus free to attend. There are materials fees in most Specialties, however, and also field trip and other occasional fees, although scholarships can be requested if there is financial need. Specialties often require some additional equipment, such as an instrument, camera, dance shoes etc.

10. How are ArtQuest parents involved? "Friends of ArtQuest", a parent and community nonprofit organization, provides substantial support for the program. This group serves as the organizing body for ways to become involved, including volunteer assistance for field trips, productions, exhibitions and Showcases, finding carpool connections, sponsoring fundraising events etc. Teachers often say that they enjoy working with AQ parents because they are typically so dedicated to their student's education.

11. How is ArtQuest structured for students? Beginning and Intermediate students spend two periods of the school day in their Specialty class. Advanced classes vary, depending on the Specialty area; some meet two periods and some one. In Music, students may take combinations of Instrumental and/or Vocal Music classes chosen from a large offering, and depending on the annual master schedule and the appropriateness of the level. Students are highly encouraged to enroll in designated "ArtQuest Core" classes which are currently Academic Freshman, Sophomore, Junior and Senior English, Freshman or Sophomore Honors English, Academic World History and Academic Physical/Earth Science. Students or parents/guardians should clearly request these classes through their counselor if desired. AQ Core classes offer students ways to connect their learning in these subjects with their arts specialty. The AQ staff also develops an annual overarching theme to facilitate interdisciplinary connections, to assist with inquiry into important issues and concerns, and to provide a focus for collaborations between the different arts disciplines and these AQ Core-related subjects.

12. How does integration between the Arts Specialties and/or the Core-related classes work? Teachers choose to participate in the theme and interdisciplinary work in different ways. Integrated projects sometimes repeat past successes and sometimes implement new approaches. Recent and past collaborations have been Photography with Visual Fine Arts, Dance with Theatre Arts, and program-wide projects such as the AQ Anthology or Poetry Slam. AQ sponsored events include regional high

school competitions such as the "Zone of Focus" photography exhibition held at the Sonoma County Museum or Arts Council and "Parting Shots", a regional film, video, and digital arts festival. Other past collaborations include "Go Figure" at the Sonoma County Museum, a sculpture installation at the Wells Fargo Center, and two large-scale projects with the Santa Rosa Symphony, *A Child of Our Time* and *The War Requiem*. All-program critiques are held, with students viewing and discussing work across the disciplines.

13. Can ArtQuest students enroll only in the Specialty class with no other AQ Core requirements? The program is committed to creating a connected community of arts students and teachers and the AQ-related Core described earlier links subject matter to the annual theme and to the Specialty Arts areas. However, although we encourage it, an AQ student is *not mandated* to take the AQ related Core and may choose other classes instead.

14. What are some of the unique features of ArtQuest Specialties? Students often work with guest artists, go on field trips, participate in a wide range of exhibition and performance opportunities, work in depth in their arts area, learn high level concepts, techniques and skills, learn the professional vocabulary of their discipline, participate in in-depth critique and reflection, and are expected to begin to develop intense discipline and focus. AQ students often collaborate, creating a richer learning experience, and establish close connections and ties, often staying in touch with one another, their teachers and the program well past their high school years.

15. Will being in ArtQuest allow me to also prepare for UC and other college and university admission? Yes. ArtQuest students can choose to prepare for admission to any college or university. Since students commit more time to their Specialty than they would in a typical high school "elective" offering, they may have to make more choices, may find it helpful to take a "zero" or seventh period, may choose to attend classes at Santa Rosa Junior College or attend Summer School. AQ students are almost always better prepared than other high school students for admission to visual and performing arts colleges or arts departments, and can present high quality portfolios, auditions and experiences. It is important to consult the SRHS Course Catalogue and the student's counselor for detailed information on college admission requirements. AQ teachers often help guide students in choosing excellent schools and programs and specialized college representatives often visit and present in AQ classes.

16. What would a sample schedule look like for an ArtQuest student? Freshmen usually take AQ Specialty (2 periods), AQ English, AQ Physical/Earth Science or Biology, a Math class of choice and one other class such as foreign language, or Physical Education. Sophomores usually take AQ Specialty (2 periods), AQ English, AQ World History, a Math class of choice and two other classes. Juniors usually take AQ Specialty, AQ English and plan the rest of their schedule based on college and graduation requirements needed, classes at Santa Rosa Junior College, special interests etc. Seniors usually take: AQ Specialty, AQ English and other desired or needed classes, depending on their goals. Offerings may vary annually. (Note: Students are now encouraged to take a Physical Science or Biology class in 9th grade and to take World History in 10th grade to better align with State testing.)

17. What about Honors or Advanced Placement (AP) classes? Honors classes are offered in many academic areas at SRHS and AQ students may enroll in honors classes at their discretion. There is usually also a Freshman and Sophomore AQ Honors English class offered. Advanced Placement (AP) classes are typically taken in the junior and senior years. SRHS has a very high number of AP offerings and students excel in the success rate on AP exams. Advanced Placement Studio Art is also offered, focusing on the preparation of an in-depth portfolio in Drawing, 2-D or 3-D Design. Students from AQ Digital Arts, Photography and Visual Fine Arts are encouraged to enroll. This portfolio can be useful for college entry, scholarships, college advanced placement or even college credit. In the past 14 years AQ students submitting AP portfolios have had an extremely high success rate of about 97%, compared to the State and National average passage of about 64%.

18. Does ArtQuest offer an Internship program in the Visual and Performing Arts? Yes. The "Artists' Exchange" class is a way to connect with arts organizations and arts-related careers in all areas of the Visual and Performing Arts. Students attend class one day a week during 7th period to discuss challenges and issues in their internships, to see presentations on internship sites and careers, to prepare for interviews and resumes, to view artist presentations and so on. They also spend an average of about 4 hours a week in their internship placement. Students have interned at sites such as the diRosa Art Preserve, SR Symphony, Press Democrat, Charles Schulz Museum, Arts Council of Sonoma County, Chops Teen Center, Sebastopol Center for the Arts, Americorps Sonoma Serves, North Bay Bohemian, SR Dance Theatre, KRCB Radio and the K-8 Santa Rosa Charter School for the Arts. An internship is a valuable way to gain "real world" experience and is a great addition to college applications and a potential source for letters of recommendation. The connections and relationships these internships provide can be invaluable in increasing skills and knowledge and in bolstering confidence. They frequently have a far-reaching positive impact.

19. What if I want to switch Specialties or even leave ArtQuest? We ask that students remain in their chosen Arts Specialty for a minimum of one year. Students should first contact their current Specialty teacher and then the AQ Director to discuss the "Migration" process, the student's potential and qualifications and intent for the new Specialty, along with the availability of space in the new area and/or level. Students are also required to make a three (3) year commitment to the overall AQ program if entering in 9th or 10th grade, or through the end of high school if entering AQ in 11th or 12th grade. If a student wishes to leave the program before this period elapses, he/she must receive approval from the AQ Director, his/her counselor and the SRHS Vice Principal, who together will make a decision based on the seriousness of the reasons for the request. If a student does withdraw from AQ early and does not reside within the school's attendance boundaries, he/she *may* not be allowed to remain at SRHS.

20. Is ArtQuest considered an "alternative" style of education? Yes and No. The time spent in the Arts Specialty is unique, as is the depth and intensity, and AQ Specialty and Core-related classes often include atypical projects and approaches. Students come to AQ from all over Sonoma County and beyond, and from diverse school environments, including public, private and home schools. AQ strives to support student success through recognition of different learning styles, high standards and expectations, project-based and literacy-embedded curricula, authentic assessment, in-depth critique, increased student responsibility and accountability, and a supportive community of learners. Having considerable opportunity, resources and support to do work in the Arts during high school is certainly an exceptional alternative for students.