

## **Common Framework for the A4L UNITS**

Arts for Learning Lessons (A4L) is an innovative literacy program that has been proven to be effective in engaging students and helping them develop important reading and writing skills, as well as essential 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and life skills, by integrating the arts.

Young Audiences (YA), in collaboration with a committed community of teachers, artists, and researchers, has developed six units of A4L lessons, residencies, assessment tools and professional development. This shared expertise has led to the creation of a replicable national model for effective practice with a common design framework across all A4L components of the program. All parts of A4L are designed to promote “learning to learn” as a metacognitive process for developing students’ skills as reflective thinkers and creative problem-solvers. Guided by the findings of cognitive science research, teachers and their students participate in repeated cycles of development, reflection, assessment and revision. The result is a proven program that engages students, raises their interest and achievement in literacy and the arts, and helps them build essential learning and life skills for school-to-work and life-long learning, such as creative problem-solving, critical and analytic thinking, collaboration and communication.

A4L is based on the elements of the *How People Learn* framework, led by learning scientist Dr. John Bransford from the University of Washington. To achieve reliably effective results, practitioners of A4L units and residencies must adhere to the essential components of A4L as aligned with the principles of the *How People Learn* framework and as guided by the Young Audiences’ IDEA model.

A4L is a uniquely-designed program that:

- ***Focuses on important literacy and arts objectives that align with Common Core State Standards.***
- ***Uses the arts to leverage learning of literacy concepts and skills.***  
Many arts integration programs use the arts as the final or “capstone” activity in a unit, however, A4L uses the arts throughout the units as motive and means to advance reading and writing. This “leveraged learning,” lies at the core of the A4L program. In the Teacher Guide, the LM icon indicates key moments where the arts are used to leverage learning of literacy (and vice versa).
- ***Uses an instructional sequence that helps students become more self-directed/independent learners.***

The design framework for all A4L units and professional development follows a four-step process that is prompted by the letters **I D E A**. Each unit begins by identifying the *Intention* and goals of the unit, an introduction to the key literacy and arts concepts, and anticipated student outcomes. This is followed by the three-part instructional process that progresses from the teacher-led *Definition* of knowledge and skills with guided practice and instruction in cycles of creating, reflecting, assessing and revising. Students then engage in *Exploration* to expand

new ideas and skills through increasingly independent practice in reflective cycles of creating, reflecting, assessing, revising and selecting their choice of solutions. A final authentic **Assessment** requires students to present or perform for an audience and inform them of what they have learned by connecting their learning to life. This transfer from teacher-led instruction and guided practice to students' assumption of responsibility for "learning to learn" uses the reflective metacognitive process that is critical to the effectiveness of the A4L program in raising students' achievement in literacy, life skills, and the arts.