

The Idea File for Schools

Alberta Arts Days activities with something for everyone,
in the classroom and beyond.



Alberta Arts Days

[Alberta Arts Days](#), which is part of the [National Culture Days](#) movement, is a three-day celebration of our unique blend of peoples and passions and the importance of arts and culture to building healthy and vibrant communities. Now in its third year, Alberta Arts Days is spearheaded by the Government of Alberta and runs province-wide September 30 to October 2nd. It includes events of all sizes, from impromptu sidewalk chalk art exhibitions to black tie symphony concerts. Last year, 91 communities hosted 681 events.

Several schools participated in Alberta Arts Days 2010 and helped set the tone for the entire weekend. Some planned a school-wide chalk art activity while others hosted musical demonstrations, dance-a-thons, story readings and more.

An Invitation to Schools

In honour of Alberta Arts Days 2011, schools are being invited to find innovative and creative ways to celebrate the arts in classrooms or schools on Friday, September 30.

To be a part of [the Alberta Arts Days School Initiative](#):

- plan something for your classroom, your school or your school and community to celebrate Alberta Arts Days;
- send your event information to ArtsDays@gov.ab.ca*;
- on Friday, September 30 get as many people as possible in your school and community involved in celebrating the arts; and
- after your event, upload digital photos of how you celebrated to Flickr and join the [Alberta Arts Days Group Pool](#) to share your experience with the world. and

*All classrooms or schools registered will receive a certificate acknowledging their participation in the Alberta Arts Day School Initiative.

Schools are encouraged to be innovative when planning their Alberta Arts Days activities and events. While the performing arts are important, celebrations could also include activities that explore life-long learning in the arts, or engagement in the creative process. Find examples to get you started in the [Idea File](#).

Whatever you decide, inspire your students to make art and physical activity part of their *every* day.

Guiding Principles

About the Idea File

The idea file contains inspiration for teachers, schools and administrators to:

- stimulate your students' powers of imagination; and
- encourage them to experiment and start a dialogue about arts and culture that will bring enhanced meaning to their everyday lives.

The idea file was compiled by Alberta Culture and Community Spirit and Alberta Education. Please send us your feedback at ArtsDays@gov.ab.ca

Non-Standard is Standard

Alberta Arts Days is a celebration of creativity. As such, events and activities will vary from one classroom to the next and one school to the next. You may choose a short classroom activity, while others plan a school-wide event. Variety and flexibility are key to celebrating Alberta Arts Days. There are numerous ways for students to participate, all equally important: acquiring new artistic skills, creating original work, appreciating the artistic work of others and connecting to one another through the arts.

Get Inspired

The idea file contains plenty of inspiration that will bring your curriculum to life.

Easy Does It

Taking part in Alberta Arts Days doesn't have to mean a lot of extra work, just an extra bit of imagination. If you want to plan a major activity, by all means go for it. But you can also add an Alberta Arts Days spin to things you're already doing. Consider a few possibilities:

- Your school's regular art activity can easily become an Alberta Arts Days event.
- You can add an artistic touch in an unusual place, for example, by choosing a piece of music to characterize each planet as you study the solar system.
- Re-imagine *Meet the Teacher* night with a family arts activity as an ice-breaker, or a local musician to set a relaxed mood.

A Chance for Community

Partnerships with community organizations and businesses can make the events not only special, but transformative.

Using the Idea File

Here are some general directions for using the idea file. Remember, these are only suggestions.

- **Browse the activity suggestions** and see which ones interest you.
- **Chose a theme** or artistic activity.
- **Adapt ideas** for the needs and age of your class.
- **Devise an appropriate introduction** to the subject.
- **Consider involving students** in planning a simple event.
- **Look for partnership opportunities** with other classes, artists, community organizations and even businesses in your community.
- **Take part in the [Arts Day School Initiative](#)** and register your event on the Alberta Arts Days website by sending an email to: ArtsDays@gov.ab.ca.
- **[Customize posters](#)** from the Alberta Arts Days website with your school's event information.
- **Have fun!**
- **Take photos** and share your experience with others by joining the [Alberta Arts Days Flickr Group Pool](#)
- **Hand out take-home activities** so your students can extend their Alberta Arts Days celebration into the weekend.

Take it Outside

Your event can reach outside your classroom:

- **Have students create a hallway display** about the arts in general, arts in their community, or highlighting the arts in their school.
- **Have students write** Alberta Arts Days content for your school's newspaper, newsletter or website.
- **Invite parents** to get involved and to celebrate at home.

- **Take an “arts-infused” field trip** to a museum, gallery, theatre, historic site, college or university arts faculty, multicultural centre, First Nations Friendship Centre, etc.

Reach out to the Community

Partnering with community organizations and businesses provides students with an opportunity to share their creativity, and to gain higher exposure, increased confidence and recognition:

- **There are likely plenty of partnership opportunities** in your community, with libraries, hospitals and long term care facilities, town and city halls, and local businesses such as cafés and malls.
- **Free event space** is a partnership plus.
- **It’s another way to connect** with the community for organizations and businesses.
- **Ideas include** exhibiting artwork in malls and store windows, singing in long-term care facilities, reciting poetry in cafés, writing a poem or short story, etc.
- **Telling the community** that the arts are vital to education is a key point.
- **Volunteerism through the arts** is a way for students to give back to their communities and share their talents. (For example, students could share an arts activity with local seniors, or paint a mural over some graffiti.)

Bring the Community to your Classroom

When students have the chance to work alongside professional artists, watch performers, meet cultural representatives such as First Nations visitors, or hear about a career in arts and culture from a person employed in the field, it can open up their world:

- **Guest artists are exciting** for students - consider rescheduling or “previewing” an artist residence planned for later in the autumn to the Alberta Arts Days weekend.
- **Explore careers in the arts**, by inviting Albertans involved in dance, design, visual art, film, music composition, etc.
- **Prompt your students** with discussion questions, artist statements and forehand research to encourage exploration and critical thinking.
- **Students can teach students** - invite a post secondary art student or a past student of your school who now works in an arts career to engage in dialogue with your students.

- **Invite elected officials** to give speeches at events.

Put the Event in Context

As part of the celebration, reflect on what the event meant to you and your students:

- **Explore the connections** between arts learning and learning in language arts, social studies, science, math and other areas.
- **Review your event photos** and write captions.
- **Hold a small ceremony** to award participation certificates and to honour students for their creativity and critical thinking. Offer positive feedback on their presentations and creations, or support for their patronage as audience members.
- **Take notes** on how it went and how you might change the activity in the future.
- **Have students document** their arts learning. Examples include displays of the arts process with photos and reflections rather than just the finished work, artist statements created with the help of questions to prompt thinking, journal entries or peer interviews.
- Send us your feedback at **Artsdays@gov.ab.ca**.

The Idea File

Visual Arts

Alberta has a rich history of visual art. Visual Arts include drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, printmaking, filmmaking and many other visual techniques and mediums.

Visual Arts Class Projects

- **Draw on creativity** – try an unusual approach to simple drawing, for example by copying parts of existing Alberta artworks with tracing paper (to appreciate the complexity of a finished work), or by tracing a silhouette; try a lesson in technique, for example the basics of perspective, or shading effects with different light sources; use unusual materials such as pastels or twigs and ink.
- **Draw on other subjects** – ask students to draw characters, settings and other subjects from a book they've read, or events they've studied in social studies; have them draw scientific concepts – a geography lesson could involve a cartoon showing the creation of a hoodoo; a math lesson could ask, what does a square root look like?
- **Paint** - try a lesson in technique, for example pointillism, or abstract art; portray recognizable objects with unusual colours for an expressionistic effect; have students paint portraits of each other (or their teacher!) in an old-fashioned style, such as mediaeval or ancient Egyptian.
- **Herald Arts Days** – have your students examine the symbols and history on Alberta's coat of arms and then design their own personal, family or school coat of arms.
- **"Found" sculpture** – put found (or random) objects together into exciting sculptural pieces using glue, tape, wire, Velcro straps, craft putty or any other material you can think of.
- **Take a snap at history** by choosing an historical photograph to recreate. Try the [Provincial Archives of Alberta](#), the [Glenbow Archives](#) and other sites. Or, have a student bring a picture of their parent or grandparent and recreate it in modern terms, to show family continuity.
- **A photo essay** is a photographic article or story on a particular theme: sports, travel, pets, the photographer's role models, etc. Have students choose a theme and develop their photographs into a print display or PowerPoint presentation.

- **Film** - help your students develop and shoot their own short film. Celebrate the inventiveness and artificiality of film through special effects, for example by staging a winter scene in the fall (weather permitting!), through camera tricks like stop-action animation, fast motion, or disappearance; or through the use of model cities, vehicles, aircraft, spacecraft, etc. Even a simple story based in the everyday life of the school will be a great keepsake for students and their families.

Visual Arts Field Trips

- **Starring Trex** – let the field trip come to you through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) [Travelling Exhibition \(Trex\) Program](#). [The Culture Calendar](#) will include Trex exhibitions all over the province.
- **Art is all around** – there is a wealth of visual art out there to admire. Head to an art gallery, a craft studio or a college or university arts faculty.
- **Public art** - the AFA lends Alberta artwork to community facilities across the province. Visit your town hall, library and other community facilities to view the art in your area. (If you think there could be more art in your community, talk to your MLA and other community leaders. It could become your own Alberta Arts Days legacy project.)

Visual Arts Special Guests

- **Real, live artist** – bring in a person who considers him or herself an artist first, whether they work at it full-time, part-time or as a hobby. Have them teach a class, or just share their artistic vision.
- **Prompt your students** with discussion questions, the artist's statement and forehand research to encourage exploration and critical thinking.

Performing Arts

The performing arts include music, dance, theatre and storytelling. Alberta has a culture of performing arts that began with our First Peoples, tens of thousands of years ago. Today, the performing arts are alive and well in every corner of Alberta.

Performing Arts Class Projects

- **Listen to music** – it sounds like a very basic activity, but how often do we truly listen when music is playing? Have your students listen to a piece of music. Can they separate different instrumental sections, different instrument sounds or vocal parts? What mental images does the music provoke? Ask students to draw these images.
- **Make a concert effort** – take your school band or choir to perform at an unusual venue, such as a mall, café or workplace.

- **Found concert** – there are plenty of ways to make musical instruments from “found” (common) objects. Build an avant-garde orchestra, and stage a concert.
- **Sing a new song** – students will enjoy learning traditional folk songs. Younger students will amaze you with their ability to learn a song in another language.
- **Music video** – combine music, drama and film making as your students create a video interpretation of an Alberta songwriter’s work.
- **Stage a good time** – rehearse and present a scene from an Alberta play; present a play reading, a performance without movement; add music and sound effects and record the reading as a radio play; present Shakespeare in “translation,” with one actor presenting the original text, and another the contemporary language – or project the contemporary language on a screen *à la* subtitles;
- **Hold a workshop** – invite students and parents to a workshop on music, drama, or dance technique. Conclude the workshop with the group presentation of a new creative technique.
- **Improvise!** – toss out ideas on the spot or play a game of theatre sports. Students will yield to suggestions and think on their feet while adapting to changing circumstances.
- **Slam a few stories** – hold a story slam, an open-floor exchange of stories based on a theme; stories can be true or otherwise; invite another class, or have students versus teachers; give prizes.
- **Rock on!** – hold a noon-hour battle of the bands performance, or sock-hop in the gym.
- **Dance-a-thon for a worthy cause** – dance as long as you can, or until the music runs out. Donate the proceeds to your students’ favourite charity.

Performing Arts Field Trips

- **Take a seat** at a concert, play, dance event or other performance piece. Prepare your students for the live experience, and to focus on the differences from movies and video.
- **Go beyond** performance and take a behind-the-scenes tour; take students to a rehearsal area, a dance studio or a college or university arts faculty; let them see the process behind the product.

Performing Arts Special Guests

- **Stick around** and speak to performers after the show – many theatres are eager to have students engage in a question and answer session with the cast of a play, and many musicians love to talk about their art.
- **Real, live performer** – bring a performer to your classroom, someone who considers him or herself a performer first, whether they work at it full-time, part-time or as a hobby. Have them teach the class a particular skill, or just share their artistic vision.
- **Prompt your students** with discussion questions, the performer's artistic statement and forehand research to encourage exploration and critical thinking.

Literary Arts

Alberta is home to one of the most exciting literary arts scenes and strongest book publishing industries in North America. There is a lot to discover.

Today's students do a lot of writing, much of it online, and much of it with their thumbs, on telephone keypads. Is this a fleeting form of writing, or does it have the potential to become something more lasting? Will students want to know, some day, what they wrote in their younger years? Introducing students to memoirs, journals and letters, and a glimpse into the past as they move forward, may help them look at their daily communication in a new light.

Literary Arts Class Projects

- **Take Alberta literally** – read the works of an Alberta author. See where they take you.
- **Write now** – the best way to appreciate short stories, poetry, non-fiction, film scripts and other literary forms is to sit down and try it yourself. Guide students with a choice of themes and genres, or allow them to emulate a writer they admire.
- **Write how** – have students listen to a sound then describe on paper how it sounded to them. Encourage metaphors and comparisons. Compare the different descriptions.
- **Glorious texts** – have students take an actual text or social media message they wrote and commit it to paper. Encourage them to decorate it as lavishly as a mediaeval manuscript, to make it a true work of literary art. Does it change their perception of what they wrote?

- **Cover story** - have students design a jacket of a book they've read, or one they imagine. Have them choose artwork and font, and write a "teaser" description and snippets of reviews.
- **Write a future** - have students set up an author's webpage, detailing their future success as a world-famous Alberta author. Include descriptions of projects, photos of their jet-set lifestyle, excerpts of their masterpieces, television interviews, etc.

Literary Arts Field Trips

- **See the inspiration** – visit a place that inspired an Alberta author.
- **See the shop** - visit a writers' workshop and watch the creative process in action.

Literary Arts Special Guests

- **Real, live writer** – bring a writer to your classroom, someone who considers him or herself a writer first, whether they work at it full-time, part-time or as a hobby. Have them give a reading, or lead the class in a creative writing exercise.
- **Prompt your students** with discussion questions, the writer's artistic statement and forehand research to encourage exploration and critical thinking.

Maybe you have an idea...

You and your students may have ideas of your own for the Alberta Arts Days Idea File for Schools. Send your original ideas to the Alberta Arts Days mailbox, at ArtsDays@gov.ab.ca and we may be able to add them to the file.

All the best in your Alberta Arts Days planning!