

A Blueprint for
Building an
Arts-Rich School
2021 Updated

This Blueprint was created in 2019 and updated in 2021 by Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY). Authors: Cindy Farlino, PCCY Picasso Project Coach; Tim Gibbon, PCCY Picasso Project Director; and Donna Cooper, PCCY Executive Director. The Blueprint was developed in consultation with the principals of Cook-Wissahickon School, Overbrook Education Center, Thomas Holme School, McClure School, Henry School, and AMY NW. In addition, Research for Action assisted in relevant data collection and analysis.

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We are proud to have the support of the following foundations as we deepen our work to bring art to more students in the Philadelphia public schools:

Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Foundation

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INTRODUCTION

The arts are a central component of successful schools. Exhaustive research confirms that an arts-rich school environment has a critical impact on student achievement, student engagement, student emotional and social development, builds pride in school culture, and enhances teacher effectiveness.

Students who receive an arts-rich education are five times more likely to graduate from high school and are 30% more likely to aspire to go to college.¹ An arts integrated curriculum benefits all students, especially English language learners, and fragile learners.²

Yet, for far too long arts instruction has served as a supplement to the school day, breaking up the academic classes. Now research tell us that when arts are integrated into the delivery of academic instruction schools achieve higher levels of student success.

In 2018, Public Citizens for Children and Youth's Picasso Project launched the Arts-Rich Schools Initiative intended to create a cohort of schools where the best practices of arts-rich instruction are created, honed and ultimately disseminated to schools across the entire district. Each participating school was granted \$10,000 a year for three years, with funds provided by the Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Foundation, Hess Foundation, Leo Model Foundation, Neubauer Family Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and William Penn Foundation. This *Blueprint* captures the lessons learned from these past three years of the arts-integrated schools initiative.

Additionally embedded in this blueprint is the work of Research for Action (RFA), which was employed to conduct an exploratory study to identify and begin tracking a set of research-aligned outcomes in the six schools involved. Their evaluation, underwritten by the William Penn Foundation, has established the necessary foundation for PCCY to track relevant outcomes and assess the effectiveness of the program over time and for future grantees. RFA's study identified that, in spite of the challenges presented by the shift to online learning due to COVID-19, PCCY's arts-rich school model effected a measurable impact on participating schools, including increased student engagement, attendance, and performance; improved school climate; and the strengthening of teachers' instructional practices.³

1 Catterall J, Dumais S, Hampden-Thompson G (2012) The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies. National Endowment for the Arts.

2 Ingram, D., & Riedel, E., (2003). Arts for academic achievement: What does arts integration do for students? Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, College of Education and Human Development, Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement.

3 Kapa, R., and Comly, R (2021). An Exploratory Study of Potential Outcomes of the Picasso Project's School-Based Grant Program. Research for Action.

WHY A BLUEPRINT?

A blueprint is widely understood as a plan for building a great building. In this case, the term blueprint will be used to describe the plan for building an Arts Rich School. This blueprint must start with a clear vision. From there the Blueprint becomes the plan that aligns the collective commitment of a school's personnel, resources, and routine of the school's operations to achieve the vision.

VISION

Create an arts-rich environment led by a clear **vision**, measureable **goals** and effective **strategies**, aligned with the school vision.

COMMITMENT

Establish a school-wide **commitment** to arts-learning that is articulated and embraced by the educators, students, and the wider school community.

RESOURCE PLAN

Organize the **resources** needed to support the implementation of the plan, that will include logistical components of time, established meetings, and organizational structures.

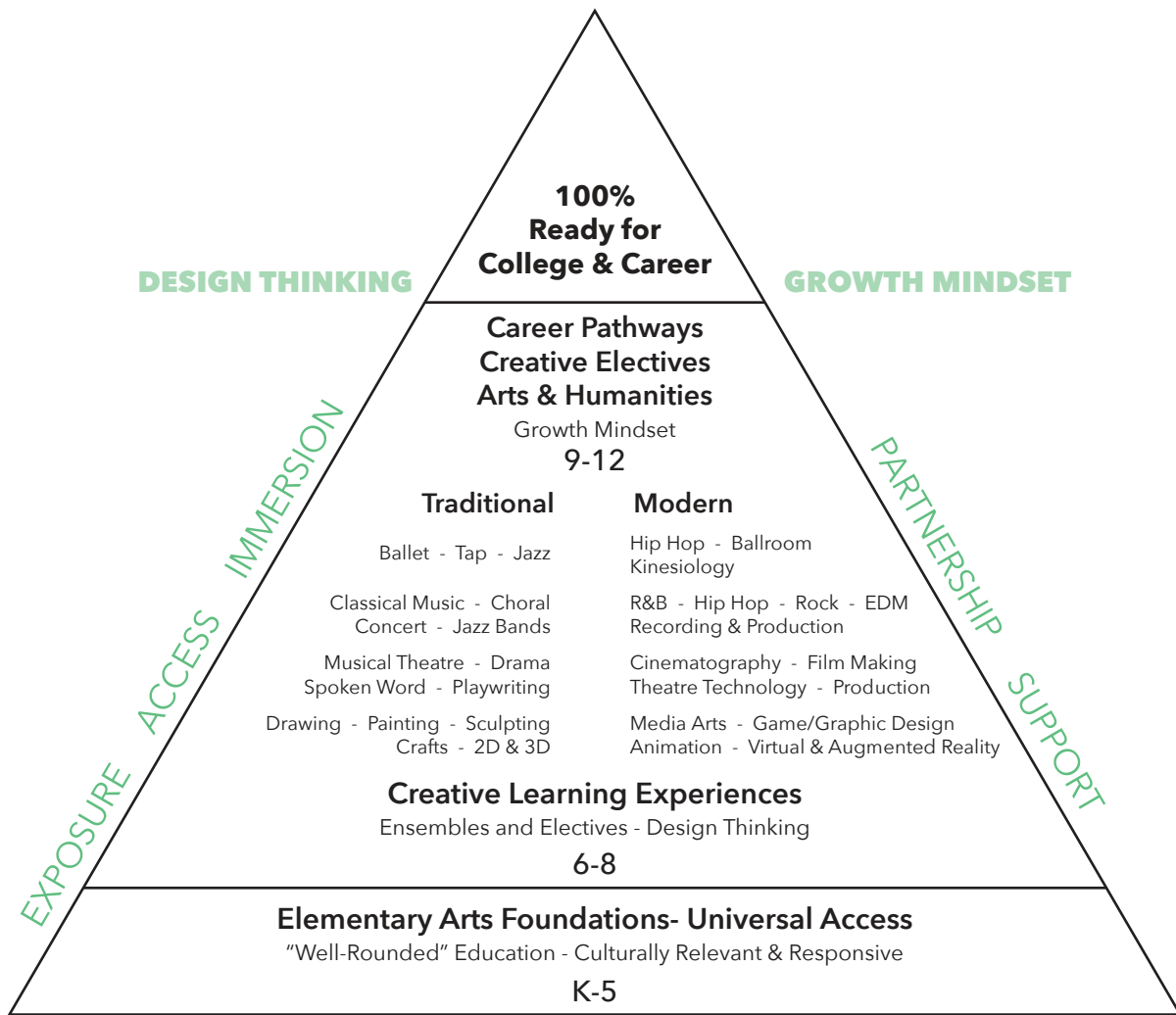


Overbrook Education Center students rehearse for their production of *The Wiz*

CREATIVITY GOALS

Aligned to School District of Philadelphia Anchor Goals

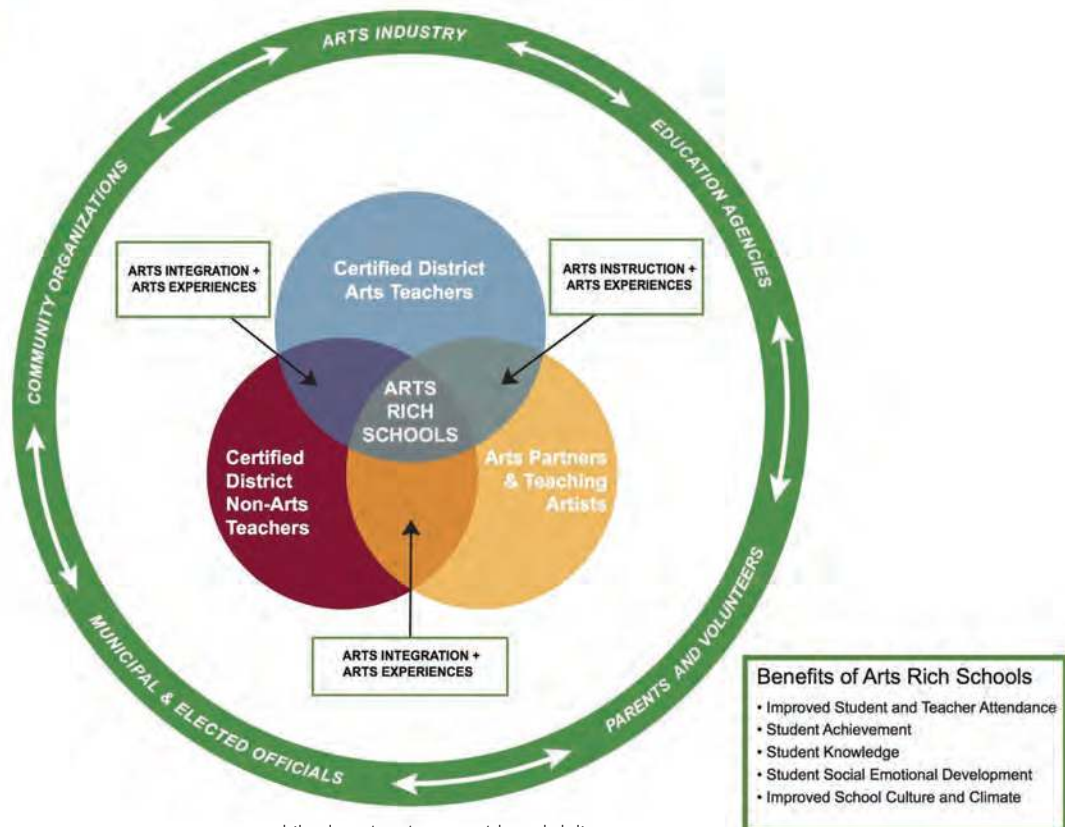
- All K-12 students **experience quality, sequential arts education** with a focus on college and career readiness.
- All K-8 students experience **arts-integrated instruction** across subjects and in support of students reading at grade level, through a “Shared Delivery” collaboration between certified arts educators, and community partner teaching artists.
- All principals and teachers receive **relevant job-embedded professional development** to ensure successful arts and art integration outcomes.
- All teachers and principals have **adequate human and physical resources for arts learning**.



THE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

- 1 An effective, supportive school principal that can communicate vision and mobilize resources
- 2 An understanding of the potential impact that an arts-rich school can have on students, faculty and the community
- 3 A team of strong arts educators and effective collaboration between school staff and administration
- 4 A school culture that engages the broader school community
- 5 A willingness to design a curriculum that integrates the arts with a skills-based literacy and learning to maximize student engagement and expression.
- 6 The flexibility and ability to use space in the school for arts activities and to creatively manage the daily schedule to create regular opportunities to integrate arts into the academic instruction.
- 7 A desire for professional learning that deepens the pedagogy of arts integration and its impact on student achievement.
- 8 The willingness to form partnerships between certified district arts teachers, certified district non-arts teachers, and arts partner and teaching artists (see diagram below)

The eight conditions listed above are essential to ensuring success and sustainability in both resource-lean times and resource-rich times.



Lessons Learned:

Successes and Challenges

LESSON

01

THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR LEADING AS AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE TEAM

- The role of school leadership in the implementation of arts-integration cannot be overstated. The buy-in by staff, successful student outcomes, and community support is driven by a leader who both understands and possesses the skills to promote the vision.
- The principal should promote a collaborative process.
- Given the work-load of school administrators, the principal should designate a separate point person to ensure the logistics of implementing the art-rich school model. The point person's job description should include calendar updates, communication and regular check-ins with educators, oversight of events, and scheduling of project meetings.
- The principal should establish regular feedback systems, which both give and receive feedback.
- The principal should support a plan for professional development for staff on arts-enriched education.
- The principal should regularly highlight successes of the project through parent/ staff newsletters, announcements, displays, etc.

LESSON

02

A VIBRANT LEADERSHIP TEAM

The arts leadership team should involve the specialist arts educators and several classroom teachers who can help the focus on art-integration in core classroom practice, and in effective strategies to improve math and literacy skills.

- Team meetings should focus on vision, program, strategies, and practices. (The vision for each school will probably look similar: "The vision for our school is to provide an opportunity for each of our students to engage in the arts through an art-enriched curriculum.")
- Team meeting agendas should include the issues of successes and challenges, and a review of student outcomes.
- Meeting should also involve a discussion of art-rich curriculum pedagogy revolving around an essential question (ex: what does an arts-enriched school look like?).

LESSON

03

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDENT VOICE

- Student leaders or student officers should be involved in designing a survey to measure student attitudes about the arts and their school. Students should also be asked for input on the arts program. This feedback will help inform the program and better target student outcomes.

LESSON

04

ALIGNING FUNDS TO SUPPORT THE VISION AND PLAN

- Develop a process for creating the budget with the school team.
- Design a process for tracking expenditures and documenting purchases.

LESSON

05

THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Research for Action was charged with establishing a baseline of data for measuring the success of an arts-integrated approach in our six schools. Collecting, analyzing, and graphing data will help us measure and track the success of student outcomes.

The data collected includes:

- Literacy and math academic achievement as measured by student scores and grades.
- Climate successes: student behavioral changes as measured by infraction data.
- Student engagement as measured by attendance and lateness data.
- Educator practice as measured by classroom observations.

In addition RFA implemented principal interviews and student and staff surveys to assess attitudinal impact and school buy-in.

LESSON

06

PLAN OPPORTUNITIES FOR PREPARED WORK THAT IS CRUCIAL FOR THE ARTS ENRICHED PROGRAM

- Summer preparation meetings are important. It is advisable to pay staff for meetings and preparation time before the school year begins.
- Planning should articulate the goals and vision for the project and create timelines, budget requests, and program designs.
 - Additionally, summer professional learning which deepens the metacognitive development of teaching staff is imperative for success in arts-integration.

LESSON

07

PLAN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Effective professional development is a critical feature to both implement the vision for an art-integrated approach and to ensure educator buy-in.

- It is advisable to plan professional development that helps teaching staff develop an understanding of the vision, goals, and instructional strategies.
- Plan professional learning opportunities involving discussion and debates on the philosophical underpinning of an arts-rich education.
- Share the vision for the project with all school stakeholders.

LESSON

08

CREATE EXTERNAL VISIBILITY THAT BRINGS RECOGNITION TO STUDENTS

- Design a public program that exhibits student work in showcases, performances, exhibitions, or culminating events.

LESSON

09

PLAN FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROGRAM

- The resources and planning for initial years should have an eye on future years without the additional resources. It is the expectation that arts-enriched educational programs will become part of the permanent vision for the school, supported with the school's budget and successful efforts on the part of the school's leadership to attract partners, grants, and other support.

THE SIX PICASSO ARTS-RICH SCHOOLS AND THEIR STORIES

This next section summarizes the program in each of the six schools, with a focus on vision and goals, schoolwide commitment, and grant resource use. The summaries provide a brief picture and are not intended to provide enough detail for a deep analysis.

McClure Elementary School

Their Vision and Goals

McClure Elementary School is located in the heart of a largely Latino community. The staff and school principal had long embraced the vision that students would grow, engage, create, and deepen ties to the community through the arts. They embedded this vision in a thematic approach of celebrating the diverse school cultures. Goals included building student self-awareness in their community, increasing academic engagement by weaving the arts into the curriculum, and increasing the collaboration among the staff and families.

The thematic approach, named “Celebrating Hunting Park,” involves many moving parts. The literacy classes read books like The Day You Begin for K-2 grades, and If the World Were a Village for 3-5 grades. Literacy lessons explored issues of the roots of our names, connections to languages, cultural story-telling, etc. Projects included classroom door decorations reflecting cultures, a fall literacy parade in which student costumes were of book characters, community weaving on Back To School night, and a wax museum that involves students researching, acting, and presenting. The year-end program involved a showcase of Latin and African dance, an instrumental concert, story telling, the choir performance, and other student exhibits.

Collaboration

The McClure expressive arts team provides an impressive collaborative model. The team is led by the visual and performing arts educators and the school principal. Classroom teachers and parents are always included in planning meetings. The success of this model greatly impacts the schoolwide implementation.

McClure School has deep community roots. The Picasso Project helps in maintaining these rich connections and partnerships. Esperanza Arts Center, COSA COSA, ArtistYear fellows, DEA Dance, and Taller Puertorriqueno, to name a few, are involved in the arts at the school.

Successes were evidenced by teacher accounts. Becky Naughton, art educator, reports, "Teachers worked in teams to address strategies to move students forward academically using the arts." Erica Zimmer, the music teacher expresses, "I see so many transformations in students who find the arts as a way to function and to move forward."

Grant Resources

Grant resources were spent on books for student use, student musical instruments, risers for choir and performances, professional development, and extra curricular arts clubs.

Cook-Wissahickon School

Their Vision and Goals

Cook-Wissahickon Elementary School is in the third year of the Picasso grant. From grant year one, the school leadership team held the vision of building a community for the arts for the entire school community. Studying the evolution of their 3-year arts-integrated project, from a middle grades' program to a schoolwide program, demonstrates a model of careful, thoughtful implementation of the grant's vision and goals.

The arts program for the first year targeted middle grade students with specific goals. These involved increasing school engagement, student voice, improving attendance and climate, and raising literacy achievement. 6-8 grade students chose small group arts classes four days a week, such as pottery, play acting, painting, dance, and drumming. Further, K-5 students were taught the arts choice classes by the middle grades students. Students created a walk-through museum to showcase their arts projects for the entire community of staff and parents.

In year two, the school leadership arts team decided to expand their arts program for all K-8 grades. The school adopted the theme of "The Sights and Sounds of Philadelphia." Their project involved the arts, the sounds, and the historical and biographical studies of artists of Philadelphia. Students of every grade used this theme to create visual and performing arts projects. Examples included mural artists research, sculpture and mobiles of Calder, ballroom and free-form dance, and local music. In addition, the Picasso Arts Committee created a Winter Arts Showcase and a virtual Spring Showcase video.

The third year was met with the full virtual learning mode. The continuation of the grant was not ideal, but the arts team and school leadership powered on with successful outcomes. The model changed from elective arts classes to a full arts integration model. The arts were embedded into the regular education classrooms adding to their curriculum. The new model focused on literacy, using the theme of Black artists and Black historical events, while making connections across all subject areas. Every student and teacher worked collaboratively with their Artist/Year resident. They learned about interesting artists, stories, culture, and social issues. They took that knowledge and created artworks, poetry, videos, presentations, and performances. The Picasso Arts Committee created a Winter Arts Showcase video and a virtual Spring Showcase video, highlighting student work and projects.

Beyond the positive preliminary data, the principal reports an exciting school shift. There is heightened interest in the applications of 8th graders to arts high schools, an increase in middle grades engagement in school, and anecdotal transformations in various at-risk students. Students in grades K-5 really looked forward to the collaborative arts days. High middle school interest in social issues, social justice, and identity added to virtual participation and an interesting break in the “every day” learning model. This demonstrated increased knowledge of the content-area through arts integration projects.

Collaboration

The Picasso Project schoolwide program showed an important progression and set a new standard for future models at Cook-Wissahickon and at other participating schools. The arts team made up of staff and administration was able to identify and expand on their vision throughout the three years. The collaborative process meant that teachers worked with teachers, students worked with teachers, and students worked with students. Their model also utilized an Artist/Year resident overseen by the Picasso Arts Committee, the art teacher, music teacher, and principal.

Grant Resources

The grant budget was spent on purchasing arts materials for student use and for visiting artists. In the third year, the Picasso Project grant funded the Artist/Year resident to work within the school.

"I was surprised to see how many of our 8th graders applied to performing arts high schools. I think this was a direct result of our arts elective program."

-Michael Lowe, Principal
Cook-Wissahickon School



Students at Cook-Wissahickon's end-of-year culminating event

Overbrook Education Center

Their Vision and Goals

Overbrook Education Center (OEC) leadership and staff held a vision for an arts-rich school. This is their third year of the grant in which they are implementing a vision with several goals. The school leadership firmly believes that an art-rich school would impact OEC's large vulnerable student population of the visually impaired, special needs, and as well as their at-risk students. Their arts goals involved increasing student engagement in the school community, improving academic success, accessing student creativity, and building student self-esteem. Additionally, the team grasped the important goal of expanding community involvement in the school.

OEC expanded their performing arts program to reach their goals. By year 2 over 30% of the student population worked on performing arts projects, which included set designs, lighting, sound, costumes, acting, dance, and music performances. Students who took part in the arts projects had significant attendance gains as compared to students who did not participate.

Collaboration

Four grade teachers, under the leadership of Principal Foote, lead the arts program with the music teacher. They put an academic and behavioral student contract in place that both established accountability and a mentorship program for struggling students.

The Dean of Students found various interventions which included tutoring and counseling. The results were amazing. One staff member writes, "There are several students who faced a family crisis last year. I think their participation in the performing arts helped them not only cope with the trauma of grief but to find support and joy again."

Community involvement also increased. Neighbors volunteered to teach drama and dance and helped to raise money for supplies and arts theatre and museum trips. Several alumni volunteered to work in directing performances and technical work. School staff made costumes, taught the play themes, and mentored participants. Middle grades students were trained to run the backstage, the lighting board, and the sound system.

This third year was especially difficult due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All classes were virtual and the arts had to be virtual too. They held a Winter Showcase in which teachers worked with students on video clips. They highlighted some of the wonderful things happening in classes during remote learning and also features the OEC Dance Club students, String Ensemble, and Band students.

The OEC Drama and Dance Club is currently rehearsing to put on a virtual Charlie and the Chocolate Factory play. The whole school collaborated on a Black History Month Student showcase in which students will work on projects having to do with the theme, "My Voice Matters." Their goal is to create another video highlighting all of the amazing projects, dances, presentations, and songs the students present.

"I am excited to see students who would normally sit on the side lines audition for the first time for our production and get selected for the lead roles. This has made a huge difference in our school. Students sing in the hallways, and I see a pride that seems to be school-wide."

-Caitlin Hoffert, Music Teacher
Overbrook Education Center

Grant Resources

Grant resources were spent on student musical instruments, risers for choir and performances, professional development, and extra curricular arts clubs. Each year the grant money has been

used to enhance the stage area which doubles as a gym. After buying lighting the first grant year, this school year they invested in a large background curtain, to be used for all school events, performances, and presentations. Additionally, grant money was spent on professional development for staff and extra curricular arts clubs.

Thomas Holme Elementary School

Their Vision and Goals

Holme School is beginning its second year with the Picasso Project grant. They were selected because they demonstrated that both the administration and the staff grasped the vision that the arts are central to learning. They implemented the Wit and Wisdom program in their classes, which connected literacy and core curriculum subjects to the visual arts. The goal for the first year of the Picasso Project grant allowed them to expand this concept, to more fully integrate the arts into the curriculum.

The preliminary results show that the Holme School climate and student behavior improved, academic engagement increased, and that special education students become full participants in the Holme school community.

Using the goal of holistic learning to focus their efforts, the arts teachers let the Wit and Wisdom materials guide their units of study within the arts classrooms. One example is the music teacher's collaboration with fifth grade students using the novel The Phantom Tollbooth. Students use Soundtrap (a cloud-based music production software) to create instrumental tracks, and then use their own synthesis of the novel to craft lyrics for a song. This project is repeated every semester with every class the music teacher contacts, using the Wit and Wisdom material as the inspiration for original, student-generated works of art. Under the leadership of Principal Gill, the arts team led a program that connected theatre strategies to literacy and social studies units.

During the pandemic, the school continues to build on thematic work in the arts by each grade. The school sent out two rounds of art packets that included sketchbooks, colored pencils, and assorted art supplies. An example of the work this year is that the 4th grade is studying Cousteau and the art and dance teacher are writing lessons with the classroom teacher. Their use of Wit and Wisdom is their model for how to use the arts for meaningful experiences.

The results show more intense engagement in classwork and deeper connection to school for their trauma-impacted students. They see in real time how the arts are critical to learning. In addition when school was in session for in-person learning, they saw significant behavior improvements and a sense of belonging to the school community.

Collaboration

They began with a strong arts team assisted by the Artists/Year Fellow and led by Principal Gill and their art educators. It was the collaboration with the arts team and core teachers that made the program a success. Collaboration at Holme School also meant using existing resources for student work like the piano lab, videography, dance and music. They brought in visiting artists, and forged partnerships with museums, the Walnut Street Theatre, Temple Arts, and Settlement Music School.

They are planning whole staff professional development on the arts.

Resources

Their budget involved expanding their lighting and sound capacity to improve the potential for enhanced student performances and recitals. They invested in visiting artists as well. Arts and supplies packages for students during the pandemic were important this school year.

Henry School

Their Goals and Vision

The art-rich vision was always at the forefront of Henry School. The Picasso Project grant goal for this first year at the Henry School was to expand and deepen their theatre arts program in order to enable student voice, and build student self esteem and school pride. In addition, the goal was to increase student engagement in school, especially for at-risk students, and to enhance collaboration among the staff.

The school created student crews for each of the performance categories: lighting, sound, props, stage, scenery, etc. This established a student-run show. More than 30% of middle school students participated which included a significant special education population. Behavior and engagement were monitored by teachers for student participation in the various

arts projects, which created visible student transformation. A positive climate impact was clearly due to behavioral changes in the student body. The school also saw attendance and engagement increase.

In the second year of the grant, the pandemic hit. They powered on. The school wanted to capture the virtual work in the visual arts. They planned for exhibiting student art work online, and then in-person when they returned to school. They used the themes from artists like Dorthea Lang to create “photos of the pandemic.” They also explored the themes of social change and social movements.

Collaboration

They are planning for arts-integration classroom work and are open to ideas on how to do this and to collaborate with all staff. The principal agrees that a project-based arts learning approach will be a great initiative.

Grant Resources

The Henry budget was spent on sound and lighting improvements in their auditorium. This change allowed for many student performances and student work exhibits, like Black history, a winter concert, dance performances, and band performances throughout the school year, culminating in the final performance.

Alternative Middle Years, Northwest (AMY NW)

Vision and Goals

The goals for the Picasso Project grant at AMY NW Middle School are directly aligned to their school philosophy. Educators at AMY see the impact of the arts on middle grades and believe the arts are critical for students to grow and achieve. Further, the school administration and school staff, view the arts as the vehicle to increase student engagement in school, improve attendance, and improve on-time arrival. The school also prioritizes the critical importance of building middle grade students’ self-esteem and self-image.

The arts-integrated projects at AMY NW involves self expression. Students are asked to both write and express “My Story” through the arts, such as self portraits (using scale math skills),

journals, poetry slams, restorative circles in advisory, and screen writing and set design. Students wrote addressing the statement, "What do you stand for?"

In the fall of the first year of the grant, a school mosaic tile mural wall was created and displayed student voices. Social studies classes were tasked with lessons on character and values as a middle school. Eighth graders presented projects on violence and society. And staff often selected books for each class to share. In sum, the use of art, music, graphic comics, and photography were integrated into classrooms during the school day. The results were a decrease in lateness, especially when first period classes involved visual and performing arts projects, and a decrease in school climate issues.

A quote from Principal Floyd summarizes, **"The arts are critical in addressing trauma and social-emotional well-being. The arts connect students to school!"**

One other grant project found success in an after-school mentoring program for students with learning support needs, dyslexia, and ADHD. The purpose of this mentoring program is based in the arts. Older students with similar diagnoses work with younger students on art projects. This helps students maintain confidence and builds a growth mind-set. There was an exciting 20-point increase in attendance for the middle grades over two years when an arts-infused curriculum was instituted. In addition when the first school period was either choir, art, or music, lateness decreased dramatically.

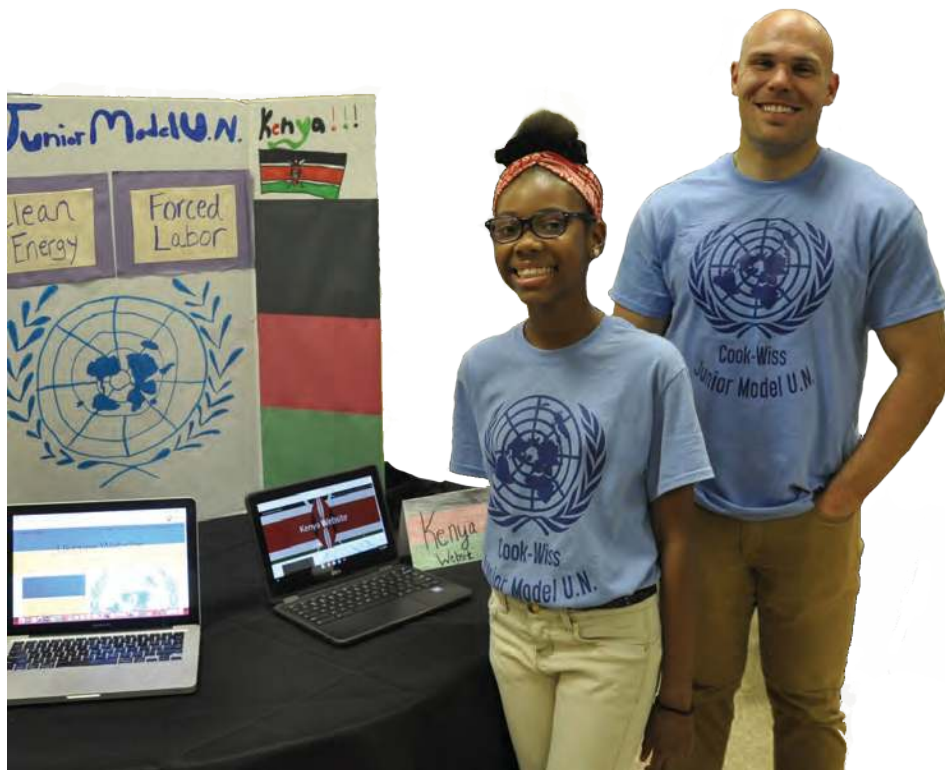
Collaboration

Collaboration began within the staff and with the Artist/Year Fellow. Deepening this collaborative school climate is a priority in the coming year. Partnerships are built with local businesses who helped find service learning positions for the middle grades and visited the school for performances. Partnerships also include the Walnut Street Theatre, the Philadelphia Arts Alliance, and the Kennedy Center for Arts Education.

AMY is exploring professional development for their staff on brain-based strategies on how the arts can increase adolescent engagement in school. The principal scheduled collaborative weekly time in the school roster for staff to grapple with this challenge.

Grant Resources

Resources were spent on a school-wide mosaic, thematic texts, art supplies, and field trips related to arts events. During the Pandemic art supplies packages were sent home for use on projects which included sketchbooks, markers, and journals.



Exhibition of student research project at Cook-Wissahickon's year end showcase

Conclusions

This Blueprint represents an on-going process to guide schools embarking on the creation of an art-rich learning environment. The lessons learned and the recommendations are meant to support the creation of ideal school-based conditions for successful arts implementation. The school stories are meant to suggest best practice models on vision, commitment, and resource plans. As the PCCY Picasso Project School-Based Grant initiative moves forward, we expect this Blueprint to shift, change, and develop.

If you would like more information or to get involved in this arts-rich schools initiative, please email picassoproject@pccy.org or arts@philasd.org.

