

# THIRD SPACE

when  
learning  
matters

Laura M. Stevens, Richard J. Dray  
ARTS EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

# Foreword

“Just read your paper  
And you’ll see  
Just exactly what keeps worryin’ me  
Yeah, you’ll see the world is in an uproar  
The danger zone is everywhere”

— RAY CHARLES

The morning of September 11, 2005 was as clear and bright as the one four years ago. The radio news show I was listening to bounced between stories of America’s efforts to mark that tragic fourth anniversary and the still emerging stories of tragedy, horror, and racism in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Two voices kept bouncing around in my head. First was Ray Charles singing, “yeah, you’ll see the world is in an uproar/ the danger zone is everywhere.” And the second was my own, asking, “Where are all of these children going to go to school?” The next question I asked myself was how their teachers could possibly address the enormous complexity of their new students’ reality.

What could make children who had experienced such peril and loss feel that school is a safe haven, not another danger zone? In truth, this question is not only relevant to the schools that have opened their doors to children of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. It is a question that can be asked of any school, but especially any school whose students are, as we say, on “free or reduced lunch”—in other words, children who live in economic poverty. (I want to be clear that I do not equate economic poverty with cultural, spiritual, relational, moral, intellectual, or aesthetic impoverishment. Qualifying for free or reduced lunch measures family income, not the other qualities mentioned above.)

Indeed, I believe this is the question raised and addressed in the study reported on in this book. Lauren Stevenson and Dick Deasy remind us that creating safe zones where children will feel secure enough to engage in the challenging work of serious learning can be accomplished in high poverty schools. Indeed, they share ten examples that demonstrate this possibility, even as they reveal the complexity of the challenge of doing this. What do these ten schools have in common? In each of them, studying and/or making works of art (paintings, dances, plays, songs, films, and so on) plays a significant role in their curriculum and their culture.

To my mind, Stevenson and Deasy ask many critically important questions. They want to know how schools can become truly powerful learning environments, not simply places that can report increases in test scores—at any cost. They want to understand the importance of situating rigorous teaching and learning in a strong community. And they want insight into what it is about studying and making works of art that creates a special and powerful “third space” between and among teachers, learners, and works of art.

This last question is, I believe, an essential key to understanding how engaging in arts activities can transform students’ relationship to their own learning, teachers’ ideas about teaching, and the culture of the school. That the arts can catalyze changes in a school that lead to a healthier and more productive environment should not come as a surprise (though it does not seem at all obvious to most people in the field of education). The arts are widely accepted as one of the defining elements of any culture, community, society, or civilization. If we want to understand the values, morals, philosophies, aesthetics, and qualities of life in an historical period or geographic region (including our own), we study the arts of that time and place. If we want to contribute to the creation of our own culture in our own time, participation in the arts as creators, audience, or critics allows us an active role in the essential conversations of our communities and culture. Making art and actively appreciating the aesthetic dimensions of human creations are ways we transform our world from a random, chaotic place into a pleasing and

even beautiful environment—a profound, but possible, transformation and one sorely needed in most of our schools.

Stevenson and Deasy have shown us schools in which this is exactly what has happened. Students have *moved* from passivity to activity, from being receivers to being creators. Teachers have done the same. Ironically, in most of our schools, being a teacher is often as passive as being a student. Teachers are conveyors of curriculum and assessment, not creators; they are discouraged from invention and improvisation and encouraged to stick to the ‘program.’ Indeed, programmed instruction is as prevalent in schools today as it has ever been. In this book, however, we see ten schools in which this transformation is underway. The arts provide the crucible for this alchemy.

The authors offer many answers to the question, “How does this transformation happen?” We have much to learn from their observations and the insights of those teachers, artists, administrators, and other researchers with whom they spoke. I am not surprised that the authors chose “third space” as their title for this book as that phrase points to what is perhaps the most essential element of this transformation—and also the most illusive. The idea of “third space” invites us to focus on that which might, at first glance, seem to be invisible. It is the “space between” teachers and learners, between the various individuals in a learning group, and between the learners, teachers, and works of art. This is the space in which meaning that has been negotiated and constructed by the members of a group emerges. When students, teachers and others (including administrators, parents, artists) gather around a work of art created by an artist or a student in the fourth grade and they strive to understand that work—what they see, what it means to each of them, what it makes them feel—they not only make sense of the work, they build community and understanding among themselves.

The beauty of the concept of “third space” is that it helps draw our attention to a space that is essential to learning and the creation of community—the place where connections are made. Arguably, making connections, along with identifying questions and having hypotheses, is a critical element of the process of building knowledge and under-

standings. Certainly, making connections is essential to the creation of effective and healthy communities. Negotiating differences in perspective, exploring alternative interpretations, and creating new solutions are all features of life in the “third spaces” of learning in and through the arts. They are also, I would argue, among the central processes of a true democracy.

Finally, it seems important to note one more feature of the arts that may explain their special role in the transformations described in this book. Among other qualities, the arts are attempts to understand both the common (experienced by most or all) and profound (of great seriousness and significance) aspects of what it means to be human. They explore experiences all of us are likely to have in our lifetimes—loss, love, fear, and moral confusions, for example. The arts strive to make visible and communicable that which eludes our general capacities to express, thus creating the possibility of forging connections between people on the ground of basic human experience.

I do not believe there is any other setting in schools that provides such an opportunity so well. Surely, the study of history, for example, can be a portal to this realm, but, as taught in most schools, it most often does not. This book suggests that the “third space” created through the study of the arts, when taught well, is a space in which students and teachers not only *can*, but *must*, be awake and in touch with one’s humanity, including one’s complex emotions and identities. It isn’t hard to understand why children and young adults would prefer to spend their days in schools with many “third spaces” than those where these spaces rarely, if ever, exist. I certainly know which I would choose.

This book suggests an alternative vision of both the process and result of school reform. It points to reform that occurs not as a result of accountability measures, but as a natural transformation through the building of a new kind of community of learners, a community of creators. This book describes a “kinder, gentler” (to borrow from George Bush, Sr.) approach to school change, not based so much on punitive accountability, but rather on an invitation to create an exciting, meaningful, and more beautiful school. It is always good to have some alter-

natives in mind when trying to tackle as large a problem as the improvement of our public schools. This book provides such an alternative. I hope we can learn the lessons it offers.

Steve Seidel

Director, Project Zero

Director, Arts in Education Program,  
Harvard Graduate School of Education

# Preface

The Arts Education Partnership (AEP) was founded ten years ago during a surge of concern over the quality of public schools, a surge that led to the development of new federal and state laws, standards, and accountability systems. The concern first found a strong voice in the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, that famously warned of a “rising tide of mediocrity” in American education.<sup>1</sup> The so-called “standards movement” prompted by the report gained momentum when the first President George Bush convened governors and corporate and educational leaders at a 1989 summit to set national goals for education. The federal *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*, passed in 1994 during the first administration of President Bill Clinton, incorporated these goals and demanded new actions by states to use the federal money provided by the law to improve their schools. The law named a set of subjects that should be taught to students in all schools. The arts were included.

The U.S. Secretary of Education at that time, Richard Riley, and Jane Alexander, then chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, were both strong arts education advocates, and believed the arts could play an important role in fulfilling the intention of the law. They jointly convened some 140 national education, arts, corporate, philanthropic, and civic organizations in a series of meetings to develop a coalition and plan for that purpose. In 1995 the two federal agencies entered into a cooperative agreement with the state departments of education through their national association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and the state arts agencies through the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies to create an administrative entity that would support and convene the coalition and assist in implementing its plan. AEP was born and has since been sustained by continuous financing and guidance from these four agencies, carrying into the administration of the current President George Bush.

From the beginning, a fundamental concern of AEP has been to strengthen public understanding of the effects of learning and participation

in the arts on the intellectual, personal, and social development of children and young people. Of equal concern has been the identification of schools, school districts, cultural organizations, and communities that engage students in quality arts activities. AEP has published a series of reports and research studies over the years to address these concerns. The reports are in wide use in schools, colleges, and communities throughout the country. *Third Space* is the latest and, in many respects, the most original and provocative of those publications. It both embraces and extends in important ways themes and findings from our previous research work.

## Earlier Research

In 1998, AEP released one of its earliest reports on the impact of the arts, *Young Children and the Arts: Making Creative Connections*, showing the role of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic stimulation embodied in the arts in the cognitive and personal development of children from birth through grade three. In 1999 we published our study of public school districts throughout the country that sought to reach all students in their schools with arts instruction and participation. The study was done in cooperation with the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and funded by the GE Fund (now GE Foundation). Ninety-one districts were featured in the report, *Gaining the Arts Advantage: Lessons from School Districts that Value Arts Education*. Factors identified in *Gaining* as important for implementing arts education in an entire district are now used in communities across the country to assess strengths and weaknesses in their arts policies and programs. A crucial finding was the essential role of communities external to the school in creating policy and political support for the arts and participating in partnerships with schools to provide quality arts programs for students.

A significant step forward in research on the effects of arts learning on students came with the 2000 publication of *Champions of Change: The Role of the Arts in Learning*, a set of seven studies supported by the GE Fund and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and published with their support by AEP, again in cooperation with the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. Among the important findings



in *Champions of Change* was the capacity of the arts to reach students who otherwise were not fully engaged by other school subjects and experiences.

The promising findings in *Champions of Change* prompted senior leaders at the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Arts to fund AEP work in identifying and analyzing other research studies of the effects of arts education on young people's learning and to publish a compendium of the strongest of the studies. AEP released this compendium, *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development*, in 2002. It was described by leadership of the American Educational Research Association as a benchmark for future arts education research. *Critical Links* analyzed and summarized findings from sixty-two studies of the effects of dance, drama, music, visual arts, and multi-arts experiences. The studies illuminate the profound and complex intellectual and emotional processes involved in learning the arts, and the interrelationships between those processes and student learning and development in other areas of school and life.

Among the significant implications of the *Critical Links* studies (reinforcing what we first reported in *Champions of Change*) was that while the arts had effects on all students, they could be particularly beneficial to students from economically disadvantaged circumstances and for students who typically had difficulty learning in school. These findings had enormous import for the challenges facing American education, specifically for strengthening the hand of schools with large populations of students from families of poverty. These so called "high poverty schools" often also include groups of students who are learning English for the first time, or who are assigned to special education classes, a percentage of whom are Black or Hispanic. These student groups tend to score lower on standardized tests and are the target of efforts to "close the achievement gap" as measured by these tests.

We saw indications in our studies that the arts helped these students to achieve, leading us to consider a study of schools with such populations at which students were succeeding and where the schools identified the arts as a reason for that success. In light of the positive effects of arts learning, we believed it was a matter of equity that schools

extend the benefits of the arts to all students in the school, including those who struggle to learn. But, how might that be done?

Federal officials again expressed an interest in supporting our work. Congress provided funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop and conduct the study. Likewise, generous support once again came from the GE Foundation. The Ford Foundation added its support while the project was in progress. Lauren Stevenson, senior associate for research on the AEP staff, and the assistant editor of *Critical Links*, led the study. *Third Space* tells the story of what she and her team of researchers found.

That story has wider implications than we initially believed for the daunting problems facing American students and schools. While the arts can indeed engage students in ways that contribute to their success on standard measures of achievement, we began to see that they play an even richer and more profound role in preparing students to cope in the present and contribute in the future in an America and a world of enormous opportunities and equally enormous conflicts. As one of the educators interviewed for the study put it, the arts give students a centered life from which to navigate through their present and their future.

The challenge to American education has never been simply to raise test scores—that is a relatively recent and limited goal. The challenge has always been to raise citizens who are capable of active participation in the social, cultural, political, and economic life of the world’s longest experiment in democracy, an experiment demanding a free, educated, and committed citizenry. We were amazed to discover anew the role of the arts in realizing that vision and creating that democracy. That is the larger story we believe *Third Space* can tell. That is why we offer it as a compelling reason to fully embrace the arts in our schools. It’s how to sustain our democracy.

Richard J. Deasy  
Director  
Arts Education Partnership

# Introduction

This started out as a very different kind of book. The research project described in these pages originally set out to examine arts instruction in ten case study schools with the goal of identifying strategies that educators could use to improve schools serving economically disadvantaged communities. We thought we would share the lessons learned from the case studies in a how-to manual for school leaders. What we found at the schools we studied surprised us, however, and demanded an altogether different kind of book.

The lessons from the schools were not only a matter of strategies, programs, and procedures, but a more complex, nuanced, and profound story about how the arts change schools. We found that the arts connected schools with their communities and enabled them to create powerful contexts and conditions for learning—contexts and conditions which we came to call *third space*. It is this latter story that we tell in this book.

## The Research Question

In spring 2001 the Arts Education Partnership (AEP) posed the question, “How do the arts contribute to the improvement of schools that serve economically disadvantaged communities?” In summer 2001 Dick Deasy invited me to join the AEP staff to design a research project to explore this question, beginning what was to become a four-year journey.

As is typical of work at AEP, the project unfolded as a series of collaborations. AEP is a coalition of over a hundred arts and education organizations nationwide, connecting researchers, practitioners, and policy makers at the forefront of arts and education. When AEP designs its projects, it draws upon the expertise of these groups in designing work of a high standard that will be useful and relevant to those working in the field.

## A Wide Lens

Our first step was to design a framework for the research. We did so with the advice of a group of researchers who had recently completed a compendium with AEP that analyzed and synthesized research studies examining links between learning in the arts and student academic and social development. This compendium, *Critical Links*, and the work of the individual researchers illuminated the types of outcomes that we might expect to see associated with arts learning. We carefully considered the ramifications that this set of outcomes could have for our case study schools.

We deliberately chose a wide lens through which to look at the connections between the arts programs in the schools and school quality. Judgments about school quality frequently rest primarily on the scores of students on standardized tests in reading and mathematics—an important but limited measure. We were interested in taking a wider and deeper look, incorporating standardized test scores into a more comprehensive picture of a school's success.

Our research advisors provided guidance as we developed a diverse set of indicators of school quality that included students' academic, personal, and social development; teacher efficacy, satisfaction, and professional growth; school culture and climate; and community involvement. These indicators became the basis for the questions that guided our interviews and observations when we conducted our field research.

## The Case Study Schools

AEP's partner organizations nominated possible case study sites—schools with outstanding arts programs, in which at least fifty percent of the students were from economically disadvantaged families. When possible, we sought schools that had been the subject of other research or evaluation studies that provided evidence of the quality of their arts programs, or that had been singled out as highly successful by national or state recognition programs. Our goal was not to demonstrate that the schools deserved their reputations but rather to explore how and why the schools believed that their arts programs were crucial to their

success, and what strategies had been essential to the implementation of the programs.

We developed a list of schools that met the criteria we had established, looking closely for overlap in the recommendations. We conducted phone interviews with school district personnel where the most promising sites were located and with the principals, staff, and community partners of the individual schools. Based on these conversations, we selected a set of ten schools for further consideration. The schools included were elementary, middle, and high schools in geographically diverse urban and rural communities.

Representatives from each of the ten schools were invited to participate in a two-day forum in Phoenix, Arizona, in January 2002, to discuss how the arts can contribute to whole school reform, improving and sustaining a school's overall quality and performance. The forum was one of three that AEP conducts annually to engage researchers and practitioners in addressing critical issues in arts and education. The schools presented and discussed their arts programs in small group sessions with AEP staff and other meeting participants. The forum thus served as an additional means of vetting the potential of the invited schools to function as case studies for the research project. Eight of the ten schools were subsequently included in the project.

In spring 2002, we began site visits to the schools. A small team of researchers with experience in arts education research joined AEP in conducting the field work. Two researchers, myself and another member of the team, visited each of the schools. In the course of these two-day visits, we interviewed teachers, students, artists, administrators, families, and representatives of community arts and education organizations working with the schools. We recorded all interviews for transcription and analysis.

### **An Added Focus**

By summer 2002 we had completed visits to four of the case study schools. Though our findings were tentative at that stage, AEP's director Dick Deasy and I began sharing them with colleagues and discussing

them at conferences and meetings, including a Ford Foundation seminar on its new initiative to support arts education in urban areas. We shared with Ford early indications that the arts were improving the relationships between students, teachers, and other community members at the schools. The arts, it seemed, helped to build understanding among diverse groups of students as well as a sense of school community.

Ford was interested in the question of how the arts could foster a commitment to pluralism and a shared sense of community in schools, a crucial challenge they recognized for the country as a whole. Ford offered support to focus in our project on the community-building potential of the arts. The decision to do so had significant consequences for the entire study and for the findings reported in *Third Space*.

With Ford's support, we convened a small team of researchers to develop an additional set of questions that would allow us to take a closer look at the nature of community in the remaining site visit schools; to see whether the arts were playing a role in shaping that community; and if so, to determine what could be learned from the process that could benefit other schools. The community lens allowed us to look more closely at the relationships in the schools and how these relationships changed in the presence of the arts.

A third researcher joined us on each of the remaining site visits to conduct the necessary additional interviews using this new set of questions. At that time, we added two additional case study schools to the study, responding to the need to include another high school and another middle school. This brought the total to ten. The final six school site visits were completed in fall 2002.

## **The Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

Following each site visit, researchers completed initial reports for the schools that they visited. Combing these reports and our interview transcripts, I produced a first draft of the themes that were emerging from the data, and in March 2003, we convened the majority of the researchers who had participated in the site visits to reflect upon, interrogate, and extend these themes. We continued our analysis with the guidance they provided.

In the fall, we held a similar meeting with representatives from each of the case study schools. As we had with the researchers, we shared the central themes drawn out in our analysis—by then more defined—for their reflection and comment. The schools concurred with our analysis and told us they thought that we had captured well the central tenets of their work. Over a day and a half meeting, we held discussions to refine the emerging framework for reporting the findings of the study.

## Two Perspectives Emerge

It became clear in the later stages of our analysis of the data that we had two major stories to tell. One had to do with the processes and procedures through which the schools built and sustained their arts education programming, making it a part of the fabric of the school. Included in this story were factors that the schools saw as important to their success, and practical lessons they had to share with other schools. This was essentially the story that we had set out to tell.

The second story had to do with the nature and effects of the arts programming—the ways in which it seemed to be changing what school was about, and the new opportunities it created for teaching and learning and for building community within and around the schools. The first story was about *how* and the latter about *what* and *why*. We faced an important decision about which of these stories we would tell in this book.

A team of school leaders—two principals, one state education official, and one teacher educator—gave us important guidance. We had asked for their assistance in the early stages of the project because they were representative of the audience we thought the project would have—school leaders. They counseled us then on how to present our findings most usefully to that audience. Together, we had imagined an easy-to-use manual, complete with tabs and tables. When we sought their advice at this later stage of the project, however, they pointed us in a new direction.

They had reviewed a draft of the book and were struck by the discussions of the changes that occurred in the schools for students, teachers, and families. They believed that this set of stories had profound implications for the way we in the United States think about and define the purposes of school. They urged us to make this the focus of the book and to widen our audience to those more generally concerned about public education.

At this meeting we discussed with them the metaphor of *third space* encountered in one of our school visits, a metaphor which we felt could be the framework for the discussion of the changes we saw happening at the schools. Despite the initial ambiguity the term held for them, they recommended that we embrace the metaphor in the title of the book and in the interpretation of our findings. They believed the term could be a signal to readers that new thinking about teaching and learning was essential, and that the arts had an important role to play in changing education. “Tell that story,” the administrators advised. That is what we have tried to do.

## The Book

In developing the final text of *Third Space*, Dick Deasy and I shared successive drafts with researchers and with staff at the case study schools. Their thoughtful comments helped us to refine the telling of the schools’ stories.

In Chapter 1, we set the stage for these stories, defining third space and introducing the schools and their arts education programs. We look in Chapter 2 at the importance of third space for students, elaborating upon how the arts help learning to become meaningful and relevant to them, and how the arts help students to develop a strong sense of self. In Chapter 3 we explore the kinds of thinking skills and capacities students develop in the arts. In Chapter 4 we look at the ramifications of arts learning for language and literacy development. In Chapter 5 we discuss the changes in schools from the perspectives of teachers—how the arts increase their satisfaction and efficacy in teaching. Finally, in Chapter 6, we



explore how the arts build a sense of community within and around the schools.

We share the stories of what is occurring in the schools through the voices and artwork of their students, teachers, artists, families, and administrators. We do our best to honor their work and to convey its importance to the national debate about the purpose and design of the public school.

Lauren M. Stevenson  
Senior Associate for Research  
Arts Education Partnership

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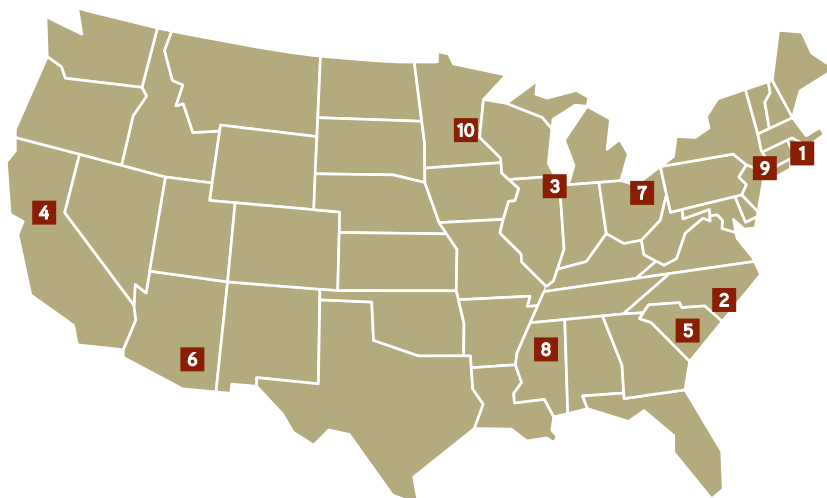
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## School Demographics<sup>i</sup>

SCHOOL NAME LOCATION	GRADES	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	% AMERICAN INDIAN, ALASKAN	% ASIAN	% BLACK	% HISPANIC	% WHITE	% FREE AND REDUCED PRICE LUNCH
<b>Central Falls High School</b> Central Falls, RI	9-12	794	0.4%	0.5%	10%	57%	32%	98%
<b>Clarkton School of Discovery</b> Clarkton, NC	6-8	358	0.8%	0.3%	38%	1%	60%	57%
<b>Dyett Academic Center High School</b> Chicago, IL	9-12	453	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	62%
<b>Grizzly Hill School</b> North San Juan, CA	K-8	93	9.7%	3.2%	0%	3%	84%	97%
<b>Hand Middle School</b> Columbia, SC	6-8	943	0.1%	0.7%	49%	2%	48%	55%
<b>Peter Howell Elementary School</b> Tucson, AZ	K-5	407	2.7%	2.2%	5.6%	49%	38%	80%
<b>Newton D. Baker School of Arts</b> Cleveland, OH	K-5	608	0.3%	0.3%	73%	5%	22%	86%
<b>Pierce Street Elementary School</b> Tupelo, MS	K-3	477	0.2%	1.3%	56%	2%	41%	60%
<b>P.S. 130</b> Brooklyn, NY	PK-5	649	0.2%	23.1%	22%	32%	22%	84%
<b>Sheridan Global Arts and Communications School</b> Minneapolis, MN	K-8	714	3.4%	31.5%	30%	3%	32%	67%

<sup>i</sup> All figures were collected from Common Core of Data (CCD). CCD is a program of the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics and is a comprehensive, annual, national statistical database of information concerning all public elementary and secondary schools.

# School Profiles

The descriptions that follow acquaint the reader with the basic facts about each of the ten schools discussed in *Third Space*: the demography and location of the school, the decisions that made the arts its central focus, and the types of arts programs provided to students. The information was gathered before and during our visits to the schools, which were completed in spring and fall 2002, and was subsequently verified by the schools. Changes no doubt have occurred since we visited: principals may have moved on, teachers retired or been reassigned, programs revised. For readers seeking current information, we provide the address and phone number of the school.

## Central Falls High School

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24 SUMMER STREET  
CENTRAL FALLS, RI 02863  
PHONE: (401) 727-7710

### School Basics

Central Falls High School is an inner-city school in the heart of Central Falls, Rhode Island, located just outside Providence, the state capital. Central Falls is a city of one square mile with one of the state's highest concentrations of young people living in economically disadvantaged circumstances. Ninety-eight percent of Central Falls High School's 794 students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Many of the high school students are newly arrived in the United States from Central and South America, from the Cape Verde Islands, and from several Caribbean nations. Fifty-seven percent of the students are Hispanic, thirty-two percent White, ten percent Black, and

one percent Asian/Pacific Islander or Native American. Twenty percent of the students arrive with few or no skills in the English language. Twenty-two percent of the students are enrolled in special education. The students, particularly those who are recent immigrants to the United States, are highly transitory. In a given year, forty percent of the student population will turn over between the beginning and end of the school year. The dropout rate at Central Falls High School is currently fifty percent, an improvement from eighty percent several years ago.

The Central Falls School District has had a difficult time in recent years meeting standards set by the state of Rhode Island, which has assumed an oversight role in the district and monitors its policies, programs, and academic performance, particularly in reading and mathematics.

### **Adopting an Arts Focus**

Central Falls High School delivers arts instruction in discrete and integrated arts classes. The school's discrete arts offerings have been growing over the past fifteen years. Students can now take sequential classes in visual and performance art, which incorporates dance and theater, taking more advanced classes as they progress through high school. Students can also participate in a choral arts program. A visual art teacher offers classes in ceramics and jewelry; a choral director offers classes in choral music; a third teacher offers classes in studio art, photography, portfolio, and performance art. This last teacher founded and directs a program that clusters her art, photography, and performance art classes into a program called Human Creativity that now extends into after school multi-arts activities through funding from the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. Human Creativity and an integrated arts program called ArtsLiteracy, introduced into the school in 1997 by Brown University in Providence, were the focus of the study reported in *Third Space*. Brown University's Education Department created the ArtsLiteracy program drawing on its research into the conditions and methods that best develop adolescent literacy. It is an integrated arts program based on the theory that adolescent literacy is promoted in communities of students

actively engaged in arts experiences involving literature and theater, taught by teachers and professional artists working in collaboration.

The ArtsLiteracy program at Central Falls began to take root when one teacher of English as a second language participated in an early ArtsLiteracy summer training program Brown University conducts for teachers and artists. By June 1997, several English teachers, teachers of English as a second language, special education teachers, and history teachers had joined their colleague in becoming involved in ArtsLiteracy. About fifteen teachers in the building now implement the program in their classrooms.

## **Arts Programs in the School**

Through ArtsLiteracy, teachers collaborate with actors, directors, photographers, and dancers from Rhode Island's arts community to devise and implement teaching plans based on a performance cycle that involves a close analysis of literary texts, dramatic enactment, writing, and original performances. Each unit of study is taught through a fifteen-session collaboration between teachers and artists. A mentor teacher is assigned to each team to help teachers and artists reflect on their practice as they engage in the performance cycle processes.

Student leaders from ArtsLiteracy provide professional development to teachers and artists who are beginning to participate in the program. These student leaders also serve as ambassadors for the program, presenting the work that they do in the program to local and national meetings of educators and policy makers.

Students in Central Falls' Human Creativity program receive their primary arts instruction from the program's founder and director, who teaches the visual and performance art classes at the school and also directs the after-school multi-arts program. Local artists conduct residencies in the program and help students develop skills in such areas as West African drumming, film, Latin dance, and theater. Alumni from the Human Creativity program also are part of the faculty. Under guidance of this team of teachers, the students each year mount two major, original, multi-art form productions, which they write, stage,



and choreograph themselves. In addition, Human Creativity's students end each year with an exhibition of their visual art work as well as a showcase of their choreography and build toward a capstone class their senior year in which they can develop portfolios to be used in the college admissions process.

Students in the Human Creativity program are also leaders who not only help to direct the work of the program but who also work to garner support for it in the broader community, performing and speaking in front of district- and state-level policy makers and the general public, and providing professional development to teachers and artists. The students also teach arts in the elementary schools in their district to ensure that younger students have the same opportunities in the arts that they were granted.

## Clarkton School of Discovery

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NORTH COLLEGE STREET  
CLARKTON, NC 28433  
PHONE: (910) 647-6531

### School Basics

Clarkton School of Discovery in Bladen County, North Carolina, is a magnet school enrolling students in grades six through eight. The town of Clarkton is rural with a population of approximately 740. Students who live in Clarkton's attendance zone are automatically granted admittance to the school, while those living in other areas must apply for admission, which is determined by a computerized lottery rather than performance measures, auditions, or entrance exams. Because Clarkton serves its surrounding community and is a magnet school for young people in other communities, its population is highly diverse and includes students from a variety of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. About 358 students attend Clarkton, and of those, sixty percent are White, thirty-eight percent Black, and the remaining two percent Native

American, Asian/Pacific Islander, or Hispanic. Fifty-seven percent of students at Clarkton are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

## **Adopting an Arts Focus**

The town of Clarkton had been home to Clarkton Junior-Senior High School, which served grades six through twelve, but by 1993 the Bladen County School District closed the high school because the town was simply too small to provide enough students. That year a group of teachers and community members formed a task force to save the remaining school; its enrollment had fallen to only 149 students. The task force decided that creating an arts-based magnet school would resurrect Clarkton because it would allow them to serve students beyond the town limits. The task force developed a vision for a “School of Discovery,” a middle level magnet school for grades six to eight with a mission to help “students discover their talents.” The task force worked with the county board of education to develop a plan to keep the school open. A slate of diverse elective courses was at the heart of the school’s effort to help its students find their individual talents. Teachers drew on their own interests to develop courses based on the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. These courses engage students in multiple ways and teach to different kinds of learning styles. Arts integration began to happen almost instinctually as a way to fulfill the school’s new student-centered vision. The new school was officially named the Clarkton School of Discovery in 1994.

Clarkton saw an opportunity for external support and in 1996 joined the network of “A+ Schools,” a program developed and supported by the Thomas A. Kenan Institute for the Arts. The program helps schools throughout North Carolina use the arts as a strategy to improve the performance of the whole school and not just specific curricular areas. Through the A+ network, the entire Clarkton faculty participated in professional development workshops and meetings to increase the sophistication and scope of their arts integration programs.

Reinvention of Clarkton got another boost in 1998 from a million dollar, three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Magnet School's Assistance Program. This money was used primarily to add arts teachers to the school faculty and to purchase arts and technology equipment and supplies. When the grant expired, faculty and administrators had to find creative ways to keep the arts specialists in the school. The school's dance teacher became certified in language arts and their visual arts teacher in science. They each split their teaching time between two disciplines. Funding for the drama, video, and music specialist positions were partially cut. A classroom teacher trained herself in the use of the video equipment to keep the video electives alive, and another teacher similarly trained herself in the use of the school's music keyboarding lab. The drama and video programs also were revived in 2004 and 2005 by a nine-week artist-in-residence grant from the North Carolina Arts Council.

## **Arts Programs at the School**

The school day at Clarkton is divided into seven approximately fifty-minute periods. The first four are dedicated to instruction in mathematics, communication skills, science, and social studies. Students participate in these classes grouped by grade level. As is the case in all North Carolina A+ Schools, arts integration and hands-on learning are used as instructional strategies in these non-arts academic classes.

The three afternoon classes are dedicated to electives. Students participate in three elective courses each quarter, unless they are taking a semester or year-round elective. Each elective course has been designed by a faculty member, often to support the content and goals of the morning courses. Arts electives include, but are not limited to, band, dance, drama, piano keyboarding, web-design, studio arts, and video. Many electives also focus on integrating non-arts academic subject content with the arts. Teachers draw on their strengths to design these classes and on the support from the schools' arts specialists.

Integrated arts electives include Scientific Illustration, which combines science and the visuals arts; Math in a Basket, in which students study the connections between math and art; Art Down Through the Ages, which integrates the arts with social studies; and My Roots, My Life, and My Dreams, a class combining communications skills and multiple art forms.

## Dyett Academic Center

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555 E. 51ST ST

CHICAGO, IL 60615

PHONE: (773) 535-1825

### School Basics

Dyett Academic Center is in the historic Washington Park neighborhood on the south side of Chicago, on the border of the 1,000-acre park of the same name. Once one of the city's premier addresses, it was home to a burgeoning community of African-American-owned theaters, restaurants, and stores. Subsequently, the neighborhood went into a period of decline as the Robert Taylor Homes – the largest public housing development in the nation – and many of the surrounding properties fell to neglect or demolition. The public housing development itself has dwindled to only two buildings, and single-family homes as well as condominium properties are sprouting up on previously vacant lots in the areas surrounding Dyett Academic Center and Washington Park. Dyett opened in 1972 and until 1998 served only students in grades six through eight. High school grades were added recently with a first class graduating in 2003. The school now enrolls 632 students in grades seven through twelve; 453 are in the high school which was the focus of our study at Dyett. All of the students are African-American. Dyett suffers much the same as other urban schools with high student turnover in a transitioning neighborhood. Its truancy rate is twenty-nine percent and attendance rate

is eighty percent, both contrasting to statewide figures of two percent and ninety-four percent respectively. It has a seventeen percent dropout rate. Sixty-two percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

## **Adopting an Arts Focus**

Dyett is conveniently located near public transportation, with direct routes to Columbia College Chicago, one of the city's premier arts institutions. Columbia College has been instrumental in developing arts programs and experiences for students and teachers at Dyett.

The college's primary relationship with the high school is coordinated by the college's Center for Community Arts Partnerships through what is known as GEAR UP, a national initiative aimed at increasing college enrollment and retention of student populations underrepresented in higher education. GEAR UP is an acronym for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs.

Columbia's GEAR UP program with Dyett includes year-round in-school services, after-school services, and summer services. Columbia faculty and upper-level college students work with Dyett teachers to provide integrated arts programs during the school day, as well as in the after-school programs. The Columbia staff arranges experiences on the college campus in the form of tours of the academic departments, classroom visits, and events that showcase collaborative works created by the students and faculty of the college and Dyett. Dyett students also enroll in the college's high school summer institute where they can earn up to three, transferable credit hours in college level classes.

Columbia's involvement brings new expertise in the visual and performing arts, literature, and technology to Dyett students and faculty, and also expands the range of arts available to the students at the school, such as pottery, photography, African and modern dance, graphic illustration, and film. At the same time, students learn that the arts can be a profession as well as a vehicle for self-expression and for developing intellectual skills that will support lifelong learning.

## Arts Programs at the School

In executing arts-integration projects, classroom teachers are paired with artists from Columbia College Chicago faculty and staff, as well as with local artists from other community-based organizations, including academic and cultural institutions in the Hyde Park/University of Chicago neighborhood near the school. To garner acceptance from Dyett teachers, staff from the college's Center for Community Arts Partnerships solicited participation from teachers of all academic subjects at the high school grade levels through surveys and a series of meetings between project personnel and Dyett staff members. Dyett teachers suggested specific projects for their students that tied into their class curricula. The teachers also identified the specific skills they themselves would bring to program planning and implementation. Initially, arts programming only occurred during school hours. However, as more students and teachers began to see the benefit of teacher-artist partnerships, sessions were extended to after school. Teachers, who prior to their involvement could not find a way to fit art into their days, became advocates for the program, integrating the arts into an array of subjects at the school. Dyett English teachers worked with a local poet and a fiction writing instructor from Columbia to produce an anthology of student work. Maggie Brown, daughter of legendary jazz musician Oscar Brown, Jr., worked with a core of students to form a vocal ensemble. In a comic strip class students produced a comic book of their own under the instruction of a Dyett teacher who, as a practicing artist, has produced his own comic book series. One student from the school also published his own comic as a result of this experience.

Columbia, through the GEAR UP program, has involved a range of departments at the college in collaboration with Dyett, including the English and the fiction writing departments, the science institute, and the radio department. Activities on the campus were expanded and strengthened as Dyett students began to request different types of programs and take on leadership roles in creating projects that were of

interest to them. The campus experiences address the larger purpose of GEAR UP, which is to motivate and prepare students to go on to higher education. From Dyett's first graduating class of 2003, three students enrolled at Columbia itself.

## Grizzly Hill School

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P.O. BOX 529

NORTH SAN JUAN, CA 95959

(530) 265-9052

### School Basics

Grizzly Hill is a kindergarten through grade eight school serving a rural community on the San Juan Ridge of California in the densely forested foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Of the school's 93 students, eighty-four percent are White and nearly ten percent are Native American. Ninety-seven percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. Due to the high percentage of eligible students, the school provides free breakfast and lunch to all students every day. The closest community to Grizzly Hill is the small town of North San Juan, which is nine miles away. Many Grizzly Hill families live on privately maintained dirt roads that wind far beyond the reaches of electric power lines or access to public transportation.

### Adopting an Arts Focus

Certified, part-time music and visual arts teachers provided the students at Grizzly Hill with arts instruction until severe funding cuts in the mid-90s led to the elimination of these positions and almost ended arts education at the school. However, the arts remained important to the staff, faculty, and community, and they found a new approach to arts education, one that extended beyond the walls of the school. They reached out to develop partnerships with musicians, painters, potters, poets, and other artists in the local community who came to the school

to lead the students in a variety of arts projects. The entire school staff got involved, including the school's maintenance man, an accomplished musician, who helped the middle school students learn to play instruments and to form a rock and roll band. With funding support from the national Rural School and Community Trust, a support agency to rural schools initially funded by the Annenberg Foundation, the school hired an arts coordinator in 1997. The following year a specific classroom was designated an arts space and renamed the "Heart Room" to signify the central and important role of the arts in the school. The coordinator teaches visual and performing arts, assists classroom teachers with arts integration, and coordinates the school's partnerships with local and international artists and with local cultural institutions such as San Juan Ridge's North Columbia School House (a one room schoolhouse that has been converted into a cultural center). Students present performances to community audiences at the center and in other locations, and hang their visual artwork at a gallery in the post office and throughout the community. The result is a partnership in the arts that benefits both the school and the community.

## **Arts Programs in the School**

Grizzly Hill's curriculum and pedagogy are guided by the school's mission to be a "place-based school with a global perspective." Faculty focus on teaching students about the surrounding area on the San Juan Ridge and use students' understanding of their environment, history, and heritage as a bridge to understanding the lives and culture of other people. The school staff believes the arts are central to this purpose as expressions of other cultures and as ways for students to investigate, understand, and express their own cultures and personal understandings.

Students study the animal- and plant-life on the ridge, as well as the heritage and history of the cultures that make up its population, including the Native American cultures. Teachers and students also experience international cultures through performances and programs involving visiting international artists. The school stresses



with students that, though the visitors are from all parts of the globe, they share a common bond with the students as artists. Grizzly Hill sees the arts as a language that students can use to communicate with these guests as well as with their immediate community. The school has welcomed Tibetan Buddhist monks; Native American singers, dancers, and storytellers; Andean musicians; Congolese and Senegalese drummers; and other visual and performing artists. Grizzly Hill also strives to integrate a concern for the natural environment through all of its programs.

In addition to hanging their work in a gallery at the local post office, students have had paintings of birds adorn the walls of the California Department of Motor Vehicles, and they have created flags representing different types of bears and hung them at the North Columbia cultural center (a project modeled after Tibetan prayer flags and done to welcome a visiting group of Tibetan monks). Grizzly Hill believes the arts are not only a tool for learning but also ways students can be of service to the community and the world.

## Hand Middle School

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2600 WHEAT ST  
COLUMBIA, SC 29205  
PHONE: (803) 343-2947

### School Basics

Hand Middle School in Columbia, South Carolina's state capital, is located in a middle and upper class, largely White, urban neighborhood but serves students in grades six through eight from several surrounding communities and has an ethnically and socio-economically diverse student body. Of the 943 students that attend Hand, forty-nine percent are Black, forty-eight percent White, and three percent Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, or Hispanic. About half of the students are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

## Adopting an Arts Focus

Hand has used the arts to generate a new image of the school. As recently as 1998, the school had not responded to the changing demographics and needs of its student population. Achievement was languishing below the 50th percentile on standardized test scores and the school was developing the reputation of having an uncontrollable school climate. It needed to be turned around. A new principal signaled with her first hire—a former policeman as disciplinarian—that safety in the school would be a major concern and steps would be taken to increase school attendance by countering apathy and instilling a sense of responsibility in students. Her next step was to analyze the faculty, and impressed with the arts teachers at the school, she concluded that their strengths could be built on to create an arts-centered school that would serve as common ground for the school’s diverse student and community population. She asked a team of teachers, administrators, parents, and community members to write a grant to fund release time for the arts teachers to engage the school faculty in designing and implementing an integrated arts strategy. They called the effort the “Renaissance Project” and the design team became known as the “Renaissance Team.” The principal and the team used three rationales for adopting an arts strategy: arts integration would be fun for students, it would distinguish Hand from other schools, and it could raise student test scores. The school also joined the Arts in the Basic Curriculum (ABC) network, a state-wide project of the South Carolina Arts Commission and the South Carolina State Department of Education that assists schools to become more arts focused by developing arts-integrated plans and programs.

Since making the decision to become an arts-based school, Hand has seen an eighty-five percent increase in the test scores of its African-American students. It has also been recognized by the South Carolina Department of Education in its Exemplary Writing Hall of Fame, by the U.S. Department of Education as a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence, and in 2001 by *Time* magazine as a National School of the Year.

## Arts Programs in the School

Eighty-five percent of Hand's students are enrolled in discrete fine and performing arts classes, and all students participate in integrated arts classes which have become a central part of the school's curriculum. There are three major components to the curriculum. The first consists of lessons that combine arts instruction with other subjects, such as math, science, and social studies. These integrated arts lessons are developed and taught by classroom teachers who have the freedom to design their own lesson plans.

The second component of the curriculum is thematic instruction that takes place with student teams. Students in each grade level are divided into two or three teams of 100 to 125 students. Students spend the entire school year in classes with their teams. The teachers of each team share a common planning period and at the beginning of the school year choose common themes to frame their curricula. The students then work with the same theme as they move from class to class. For example, students study weather patterns in science, write original poems and fiction about the weather in language arts class, and study the effects of weather on ancient structures in history.

The third component of the curriculum is also thematic, but rather than being team-based, it is school-wide. Every year, teachers are selected to be members of the Renaissance Team, the group of teachers, parents, and administrators that develops and oversees the school-wide theme. All instruction throughout Hand culminates in a day-long event in which each grade level creates and hosts an event for students in other grades. For example, a recent school-wide theme was *renaissance*. Eighth-grade students focused on the Harlem Renaissance and played the part of famous poets, while seventh-grade students focused on the Renaissance of ideas that took place in post-1940 America, and sixth graders hosted a medieval fair.

# Newton D. Baker School of Arts

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3690 W. 159TH ST  
CLEVELAND, OH 44111  
PHONE: (216) 252-2131

## School Basics

Newton D. Baker School of Arts is a kindergarten through grade five arts magnet school with a lottery-based admission system on the west side of Cleveland, Ohio. The school serves 608 students. Seventy-three percent are Black, twenty-two percent White, five percent Hispanic, and one percent American Indian or Asian/Pacific Islander. Eighty-six percent of the students are eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch. Students come to the school from all sections of the Cleveland Municipal School District.

## Adopting an Arts Focus

In 1993, a school principal in the Cleveland School District approached the newly appointed district superintendent and got permission to create an arts magnet school. The principal and a group of teachers had experience with Discipline Based Arts Education (DBAE), the art education model designed and promoted nationally by the Getty Education Institute for the Arts. The principal and teachers used the model to develop a plan to integrate, strengthen, and expand the arts into the curriculum and programs of the existing Newton D. Baker school.

In order to ensure that all faculty understood and embraced the DBAE art education philosophy and teaching techniques, all new staff were required to take discipline-based art education courses. The principal stressed that they would be working in a demanding environment and that the processes of getting an arts-centered curriculum off the ground would be challenging and time-intensive. Teachers in different grade levels met at least once a month to plan arts integrated lessons and to discuss strategies for helping students reach high levels of academic performance. Parents were invited to “open days” to observe

the new programs to build their support for the new direction of the school. The school recruited teaching artists from the community to work with teachers and students to integrate arts into the academic curriculum and raised funds from corporations to buy art supplies and to pay the salaries of the artists-in-residence.

## Arts Programs in the School

Arts integration is the heart of the curriculum at Newton D. Baker. Each year a theme is selected, focusing on an international region and its cultures, for example, Asia, Africa, Europe, or Latin America; or a region or culture within the United States, for example, Cleveland, Ohio, Native American culture and history, or African-American culture and history. The school staff meets for two days in August each year to discuss that year's theme, the goals of the integrated arts programs, and their plans and activities.

All the thematic and arts-integrated lessons and units address three essential questions, which have been developed over time by the staff: 1) How does this object, artwork, artifact, or performance tell about social ways of life (e.g., rituals, norms, behaviors, traditions, celebrations, customs)? 2) How does this object, artwork, artifact, or performance tell about social values and beliefs? and, 3) How does this object, artwork, artifact, or performance reflect how cultural groups change over time—past, present, and future?

Integrated units are taught by DBAE-trained classroom teachers independently or in partnership with the school's arts specialists or teaching artists from community arts partners, such as the Cleveland Museum of Art or the Cleveland Opera. The units culminate in a major event or performance at the end of the year.

In addition to integrated arts classes, all Newton D. Baker students participate in discrete arts classes in visual arts, dance, drama, and vocal and instrumental music. Teachers identify students to participate in advanced art electives (e.g., super choir or art club). These classes are scheduled as “pullouts” where students leave their regular classrooms to participate in these extra arts electives. In order to make

this scheduling system work, students who are pulled out have “peer partners” in their classes who help them catch up on any missed work and keep extra folders of the relevant assignments. Students are responsible for keeping up to speed in all of their classes. No pullouts occur during mathematics and reading classes.

Family and community participation play important roles at Newton D. Baker. In order to ensure that families are involved in the creation of the curriculum, the school has created an arts curriculum committee that consists of a general classroom teacher from each grade level; a Title I-funded science and writing teacher; a visual arts teacher; the school’s program coordinator, principal, and family liaison; and two parents.

Each year, parents host an arts festival at the beginning of the school year where they and their children complete an arts integrated unit together.

## Peter Howell Elementary School

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401 N. IRVING

TUCSON, AZ 85711

PHONE: (520) 232-7200

### School Basics

Peter Howell Elementary School in the Tucson Unified School District in Arizona enrolls 407 students in kindergarten through grade five. Forty-nine percent of the students are Hispanic, thirty-eight percent White, six percent Black, three percent Native American, and two percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Half of the students are learning English as a second language. Peter Howell’s student body is economically diverse. Many students come from the middle class neighborhood surrounding the school, but under a desegregation order about half of the students are bused to Peter Howell from other parts of the city, including more economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Approximately eighty percent of Peter Howell’s students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

## **Adopting an Arts Focus**

When a new principal walked into Peter Howell Elementary School in Tucson in 2000, she found teachers using whistles in an attempt to control noise and chaotic behavior among the students. She decided to replace the shrill with the soothing, installing speakers throughout the building to broadcast classical music during the day and hanging works of art on the walls: a series of statements that the aesthetics of the school could and should influence the learning and behavior of students. Her own background included music study and also graduate work that included review of the emerging research into the relationships between brain functions and the arts. She had also learned from her previous experience that the arts were avenues to learning for lower income students. A music teacher was hired immediately to integrate music into the curriculum.

The principal found common cause with the fine arts department of the Tucson Unified School District, which was developing a music-centered arts integrated curriculum called Opening Minds Through the Arts (OMA) based in part on these same premises about the connections between the arts and brain development, specifically identifying the connections between music learning and student intellectual development. Peter Howell became one of the pilot schools for the new curriculum.

Recent evaluations of the OMA program indicate that it has been successful at Peter Howell and at other schools in the district in improving student achievement, including increasing standardized test scores. The state of Arizona has announced it will seek to replicate the approach at schools across the state.

## **Arts Programs in the School**

Peter Howell implements the OMA program school-wide and integrates the arts across the curriculum. Peter Howell employs a full-time music teacher and all students study the recorder and violin. Students also work with teaching artists who conduct residencies in the arts and in non-arts classes, again integrating arts instruction with the teaching of other academic subjects.

Peter Howell's kindergartners focus on auditory acuity and work with a string quartet or woodwind trio from the University of Arizona or the Tucson Symphony Orchestra. First-grade students work with University of Arizona opera students to enhance their language and writing abilities; they develop and perform original operas based on literary masterpieces. Students in the second grade work with dance specialists to interpret and respond to music while focusing on collaboration, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving. In the third grade, students learn how to compose original music to assist them in the development of decoding skills believed to be important for reading such as abstract reasoning skills and spatial intelligence, both being important for many disciplines including mathematics. Fourth-grade students further their decoding skills, abstract reasoning, and spatial intelligence, while those in the fifth grade use a thematic approach to compose, direct, stage, and perform original musical and musical theater productions. An after-school program called Project Shine, funded by the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, offers a range of academic development programs, including high-quality instruction in the visual arts.

## Pierce Street Elementary School

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1008 PIERCE STREET  
TUPELO, MS 38801  
PHONE: (662) 841-8940

### School Basics

Pierce Street Elementary School has the most diverse school population in the Tupelo School District in Mississippi, enrolling 477 students in kindergarten through third grade. Fifty-six percent of students are Black, forty-one percent White, and three percent Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, or Native American. Pierce Street serves the largest percentage of English language learners and homeless students



in the district. Sixty percent of the students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch. Federal housing officials and government consultants describe the school's population as virtually identical to inner city schools in major metropolitan areas in the United States.

### **Adopting an Arts Focus**

Beginning in the 1994-95 school year, Pierce Street began a process of revitalizing teaching and learning through a deliberate infusion of the arts as discrete areas of study, and as an integrative focus for all subjects and areas of the curriculum. Based on its Early Prevention of School Failure assessment and other pre-testing data, the Pierce Street staff concluded that a large percentage of the school's students were entering kindergarten severely delayed in the areas of expressive and receptive language as well as motor, auditory, and visual skills. Pierce Street's teachers and administrators believed that the best way to address the diverse learning styles and rates of their students was to integrate arts into the school curriculum. All students would then have opportunities to make meaningful work, to better express themselves, and to be valued by others for their accomplishments.

Building on this inclusive philosophy and vision for the role of the arts at Pierce Street, the school in 1995-96 began participating in the Whole Schools Project of the Mississippi Arts Commission, a project designed to help schools implement school-wide, arts-centered reform strategies. At the beginning of the 1996-97 school year, Pierce Street began implementing the Whole Schools reform through overarching, interdisciplinary thematic strands as the basis of instruction in all grades. In preparation for the introduction of this thematic approach, teachers and arts specialists rethought the existing curriculum to ensure that the arts were integrated well across other academic disciplines, and that the arts and non-arts content would become mutually reinforcing. Pierce Street's arts initiative, titled "The Discovery Zone," has yielded high-quality arts experiences for students, staff, administrators, parents, and community members.

Staff development was a central component of the plan. The entire staff at Pierce Street was formally trained in the Discipline-Based Arts

Education approach of the J. Paul Getty Institute for Art Education and regularly participated in the Mississippi Arts Commission's Whole Schools Project institutes and retreats. Additionally, the entire Pierce Street staff engaged in monthly staff development with professional artists. In order to ensure that the arts integration at Pierce Street maintains its high standards and is constantly growing, new staff members beginning at Pierce Street are assigned mentors to assist them in implementing the Whole Schools Project.

## **Arts Programs in the School**

Students at Pierce Street receive sixty minutes of instruction each week in music, movement/dance, media, and Spanish. Sixty minutes of drama and visual art instruction are offered in alternating weeks. Grade level teachers, arts specialists, and resource teachers plan their respective units together, discussing guidelines, strategies, expectations, and evaluations for each unit. Artist residencies provide Pierce Street students and staff an opportunity to use the arts as a tool for learning and to stay connected with the surrounding community. In an effort to ensure that teaching artists are competent in their discipline and capable of being effective teachers, the teaching artists are chosen from the roster of artists selected and trained by the Mississippi Arts Commission.

## **P.S. 130**

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70 OCEAN PARKWAY  
BROOKLYN, NY 11218  
PHONE: (718) 686-1940

## **School Basics**

P.S. 130 Elementary School in Brooklyn, New York, enrolls 649 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Seventeen different languages are spoken by its students, reflecting the diversity of the Brooklyn community it serves. Twenty percent of the students are

recent immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Russia. Forty-four percent are English language learners. Eighty-four percent are eligible for free and reduced-priced lunch.

## **Adopting an Arts Focus**

In 1989, P.S. 130 began a relationship with ArtsConnection, a private, nonprofit arts-in-education organization in New York City. The school initially participated in ArtsConnection's Young Talent Program, which provides students with talent or interest in music, dance, or theater up to forty hours of in-school and after-school training in their chosen area. Based on the success of the Young Talent Program, P.S. 130's principal expanded the partnership with ArtsConnection so all students could benefit from the arts experiences. Ongoing long-range planning was, and continues to be, the essential component of the partnership. A goal of a first three-year plan was to create a safe space for students to learn the English language by using the arts to develop trust and a sense of community in the school. A second three-year plan seeks to develop literacy skills through arts integration, focusing in particular on storytelling, puppetry, and performance. The partnership brings teaching artists into each classroom every year. Full-time visual arts and music specialists also provide instruction to students.

## **Arts Programs in the School**

Since 1998, ArtsConnection and P.S. 130 have integrated sequential visual arts and music programs into the school's social studies curriculum. Beginning in 2001 the school also chose to focus on literacy and language skills because of its rapidly diversifying population and the high percentage of students learning English as a second language. To do so, the partners designed a sequential theater arts curriculum to develop speaking, listening, and writing skills and to deepen story comprehension. In 2001 they were able to implement this theater arts curriculum with support from an Arts Education Model Development and Dissemination Grant from the U.S. Department of Education. In kindergarten and first grade, students develop original stories and traditional tales through the integration of

visual arts, creative movement, drama, and puppetry. Storytelling and creative dramatics are the focus in the second and third grade and students interpret and retell stories through vocal, physical, and emotional expression. Fourth and fifth graders learn the formal theater arts, studying the basic elements of acting and playmaking through collaborative activities.

The relationship between P.S. 130's classroom teachers and their artist colleagues is central to successfully integrating the arts into the curriculum. A school-wide policy requires its classroom teachers to meet with their artist partners regularly over the course of the semester. The classroom teacher and teaching artist partner to identify specific learning goals in social studies or language arts, agree upon the set of classroom activities that the artist will conduct and determine how the teacher can best support and participate in the instruction. Teachers and visiting artists hold meetings on a regular basis during the year to review and evaluate their goals, achievements, and progress. Students also engage in structured meetings led by the classroom teacher, teaching artists, or members of the ArtsConnection staff to reflect on and articulate what they have learned.

As part of their federal grant, ArtsConnection and P.S. 130 teachers and teaching artists are researching whether and how artist-teacher partnerships facilitate the students applying storytelling skills to learning and achievement in literacy and other subjects.

## Sheridan Global Arts and Communications School

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### School Basics

In 1990-91 Sheridan Elementary School was renamed Sheridan Global Arts and Communications School, the first step in becoming an arts magnet serving the northern half of Minneapolis, Minnesota, an economic empower-

ment zone. The student population in 2000 of 714 in kindergarten through grade eight was selected by lottery. Thirty percent of the students are Black, thirty-two percent Asian/Pacific Islander, thirty-two percent White, three percent Native American, and three percent Hispanic. Of the Asian student population, ninety-five percent are Hmong children born in the United States, especially to first-generation immigrant families, but who enter Sheridan testing at zero-level in English. Approximately seventy-five percent of all Sheridan students come into kindergarten with no book experience. Significant numbers of students in each grade are challenged by poverty, family instability, and lack of early childhood preparation. Sixty-seven percent of the students receive free or reduced-priced lunch.

### **Adopting an Arts Focus**

In 1972, busing in Minneapolis began as a result of court-ordered school desegregation. When Black students were bused into Sheridan, many local parents transferred their children to private Catholic schools. These dramatic changes in the school demography contributed to years of instability. The school was closed from 1982 until 1988 during a period of district-wide enrollment decline. It reopened in 1988 for grades three to six. In 1989, a new principal was assigned to lead the school. When she arrived, she found that student achievement was low, the student body exhibited unusually high numbers of behavioral problems, and both student and teacher morale was poor. Teachers spoke despairingly about the changes in the Sheridan population, questioning whether such highly mobile students who lived in poverty could learn.

Minneapolis had created an arts magnet program in the late seventies on the Southside of the city, a program which was highly popular with parents. For years the school had not been able to accept all the students whose parents selected it as their school of choice. The district superintendent and the new principal at Sheridan agreed that a group of thirty-five parents who were unable to enroll their children in the Southside magnet that spring be asked to help introduce arts program at Sheridan. The principal believed strongly that the arts would be the best vehicle to improve the school's climate and performance.

She began by recruiting a kindergarten teacher from the Southside arts magnet to help her create an arts integrated kindergarten. The following year the school became part of a federal grant to assist Minneapolis in developing magnet programs in racially isolated schools. The vision for Sheridan then became a fine arts magnet school to serve students in kindergarten through grade eight. With the magnet grant, the principal was able to hire a teacher as arts coordinator. First, second, and third grades were added and also took on the arts-centered curriculum. In each succeeding year, the arts focus expanded as the grade levels grew until Sheridan became an arts integrated kindergarten through grade eight magnet in 1998-99.

Sheridan has found ways to continually strengthen and expand its arts programs. In 1995 the school received a federal grant to teach Hmong arts and culture to all Sheridan students, along with Hmong literacy to its Hmong families, who in turn worked with the school to teach their arts and culture. In 1997 an Annenberg Challenge grant was awarded to the school district and Sheridan became part of the ensuing Arts for Academic Achievement program, using its share of funds to support arts programs in the school. In 2001 the U.S. Department of Education awarded a Model Arts Education and Dissemination Grant to the district in partnership with the state arts agency, the Perpich Center for Arts Education. Sheridan's history and experience in the arts informed the design of the model. The U.S. Department of Education also awarded Sheridan a Comprehensive School Reform Grant in 2003, recognizing its arts-centered program as a school-wide reform model.

## **Arts Programs in the School**

Sheridan's mission statement expresses how the values and goals of the school shape the curriculum: "The purpose of the Sheridan Global Arts and Communications School is to empower its students to grow and to work successfully in a world in which all countries are becoming more and more interdependent with each other. Students pursue a multi-cultural curriculum emphasizing communication and technology in the visual, performing and media arts."

The content and sequence of programs and courses reflect this multidisciplinary emphasis. While students in kindergarten through grade five study language arts, science, and mathematics at each level, they also are progressively exposed to the arts to develop artistic abilities and appreciation. In these early grades, they engage in an average of thirty-eight hours of class time per year in dance, visual art, vocal music, media arts, and foreign languages. Each first- through sixth-grade student also studies a stringed instrument; in fourth grade, students can choose to study a band instrument in addition to strings. Seventh- and eighth-grade years are more focused and each student concentrates on one of the following arts areas: band/orchestra, visual art, dance, media arts, vocal music, or technology. During these “focus years,” students spend about 120 hours a year working in their arts area, and they have opportunities to continue learning French and to study African music. Along with the arts, multiculturalism is emphasized at Sheridan, both in curriculum and in school activities. Culturally themed dinners are held where students and their families enjoy African-American, European-American, and Hmong meals.

Collaboration is a key component of Sheridan’s program. Arts specialists work closely with teachers of math, science, and language arts. The school also uses visiting artists who bring specific skills and areas of expertise to the program. The school’s two fine arts coordinators are responsible for managing the communications and planning among in-school educators and teaching artists from the community.