

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Arts & Science Council and ArtsTeach A Strong Model Partnership

Twenty years ago, at the time when public funding for the arts was at the center of national debate, a ten year plan was designed and implemented that designated arts education as a top priority for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. A number of strategies contributed to and helped shape the resulting plan. Surveys conducted by consultants found “overwhelming” community support for the arts in education, including endorsement by 92 percent of respondents for additional classroom instruction in the arts. As a result, school arts administrators and local artists began exploring options together. They articulated a mission and goals statement with the aim of building a high-quality, comprehensive arts education program that would be nationally recognized within five year’s time. Out of a need identified in a community action plan, ArtsTeach was created in 1997. From that plan came a loud and clear message: the citizens of Charlotte-Mecklenburg valued arts education.

The evidence is clear that the study of the arts contributes to student achievement and success. The mission of ArtsTeach is to build partnerships which maximize academic learning for students through exposure, practice and the infusion of the arts.

- How do we know arts education programs work?
 - Teachers and parents have articulated that:
 - “they never overlook the arts as a teaching tool, and that their students for the remainder of their careers will benefit”
 - In the Fall of 2005, a poll was conducted by KPC Research for the Charlotte Advocates for Education about CMS, found that the #1 UNTOUCHABLE item was "music and art". The arts are of great value to our community.
- What are the CMS arts education programs?
 - The Arts Education department supports over 550 dance, music, theatre arts, and visual arts teachers, K-12. Approximately 96,000 of the 127,000 students district-wide are involved in arts instruction.
 - Students highly involved in arts instruction earned better grades and performed better on standardized tests, performed more community service, watched fewer hours of television, reported less boredom in school, and were less likely to drop out of school.(National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS:88) University of California-Los Angeles.) This research is consistent with CMS’s student population.
 - All students in elementary schools participate in weekly arts education classes. In the sixth grade, students participate in an exploratory arts education rotation. Students in middle school may also elect to study more arts in specific arts courses. In high schools, students may take a full range of introductory as well as advanced level courses. Honors, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate courses provide in-depth learning opportunities in arts education.

- Who benefits from ArtsTeach?
 - All CMS schools, grades k-12 receive at least one ArtsTeach program each year
 - Programs are offered to over 80,000 students
 - Over 4,000 teachers and teaching artists and 49,000 parents and community members are impacted which creates a seamless organization that works in partnership with CMS
 - ArtsTeach is an organization whose very mission is centered around the value of arts education. We live out that mission in this community by creating partnerships - partnerships to maximize academic learning for students
- What does that mean ... and how do we do it?
 - Annually meet with the Superintendent and Associate Superintendent for Education Services and determine collaboratively where ArtsTeach can assist CMS with their greatest need for growth in teaching and learning.
 - As a result of this dialogue, a grade level and content area are targeted and professional development is tailored to help teachers and teaching artists grow in their use of quality, arts-infused instruction. A strong, collaborative relationship between teaching artist, classroom and arts teachers is fostered and the CMS goal of academic achievement is supported.
 - Through a grants program, ArtsTeach provides a large portion of the funding to bring every 4th and 5th grader in CMS to hear the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra perform at Ovens Auditorium. This example demonstrates the uniqueness of the grants which emphasize learning in and through the arts.
 - All 12th grade CMS high school students this year will attend a performance of Macbeth, presented by NCDT.
 - The Mint museums partner with Dilworth Elementary 4th & 5th grade students to analyze how stories are communicated through the written word and visual images.

Across many schools, artists and teachers are working together to use the arts as a vehicle to make curriculum come alive - which is a great opportunity for CMS at-risk students in particular to be successful. ArtsTeach has successfully created a seamless organization that works in partnership with CMS and the Arts & Science Council. At ArtsTeach, we believe that when the arts are integrated with academic subjects, they generate conditions that strengthen the learning environment.

ArtsTeach is privileged to have been recently selected as a regional program site of the Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts. North Carolina has historically been a leader in early childhood education led by Governor Easley, with national recognition for its statewide SmartStart Initiative, More at Four Program, and Bright Beginnings program for preschool children. These initiatives focus on ensuring that all children under the age of six are healthy and prepared for success when they enter school. Wolf Trap Institute's focus on the power of the arts to address the physical, emotional and intellectual needs of our youngest learners fits beautifully with North Carolina's

curriculum goals for Pre-K programs. Starting in academic year 2007, children at Tryon Hills Pre-K Learning Center will learn basic academic and life skills through active participation in performing arts led by teaching artists and provide professional development for teachers through practical application of these techniques.

ArtsTeach will partner with the School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) to develop a matrix for measuring the success of anticipated outcomes during the NCWT pilot year and beyond. The NCWT program's pilot year is unique, in that it will launch at only one site, Tryon Hills, enabling evaluators to compare the program's success to a control group at another CMS school. ArtsTeach has selected Amay James Pre-K Center as the control school, with the invitation to join the program in its second year. Both schools currently utilize the Bright Beginnings curriculum, creating parity in the evaluation process. The ArtsTeach/UNC-CH partnership extends beyond the NCWT program's impact on pre-K students, as it will also develop a longitudinal study that tracks participating students' success through the third grade. This study will enable CMS to track learning trends for program participants versus non-participants, allowing ArtsTeach and CMS to customize future arts education professional development workshops for a wider range of teachers.

UNC-Chapel Hill will evaluate each of the outcomes defined and ArtsTeach has secured the assistance of PhD candidates under Dawson Hancock in the research department at UNC - Charlotte for classroom observation of teaching artists, teachers and students during the pilot year. Dr. Hancock has just completed our second year of research and evaluation for a longitudinal study of our ArtStart Professional Development Program as well.