

# A Blueprint for Building an Arts-Rich School

This Blueprint was created in 2019 by Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY). Authors: Cindy Farlino, PCCY Picasso Project Coach; Tim Gibbon, PCCY Picasso Project Director; and Donna Cooper, Executive Director, PCCY. Blueprint was created in consultation with the principals of Cook-Wissahickon School, Overbrook Education Center, and Tilden Middle School.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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

## INTRODUCTION

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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.<sup>1</sup> An arts integrated curriculum benefits all students, especially English language learners, and fragile learners.<sup>2</sup>

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 districts. This Blueprint captures the lessons learned from the first cohort of year of arts-rich schools.

## Why a BLUEPRINT?

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*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.

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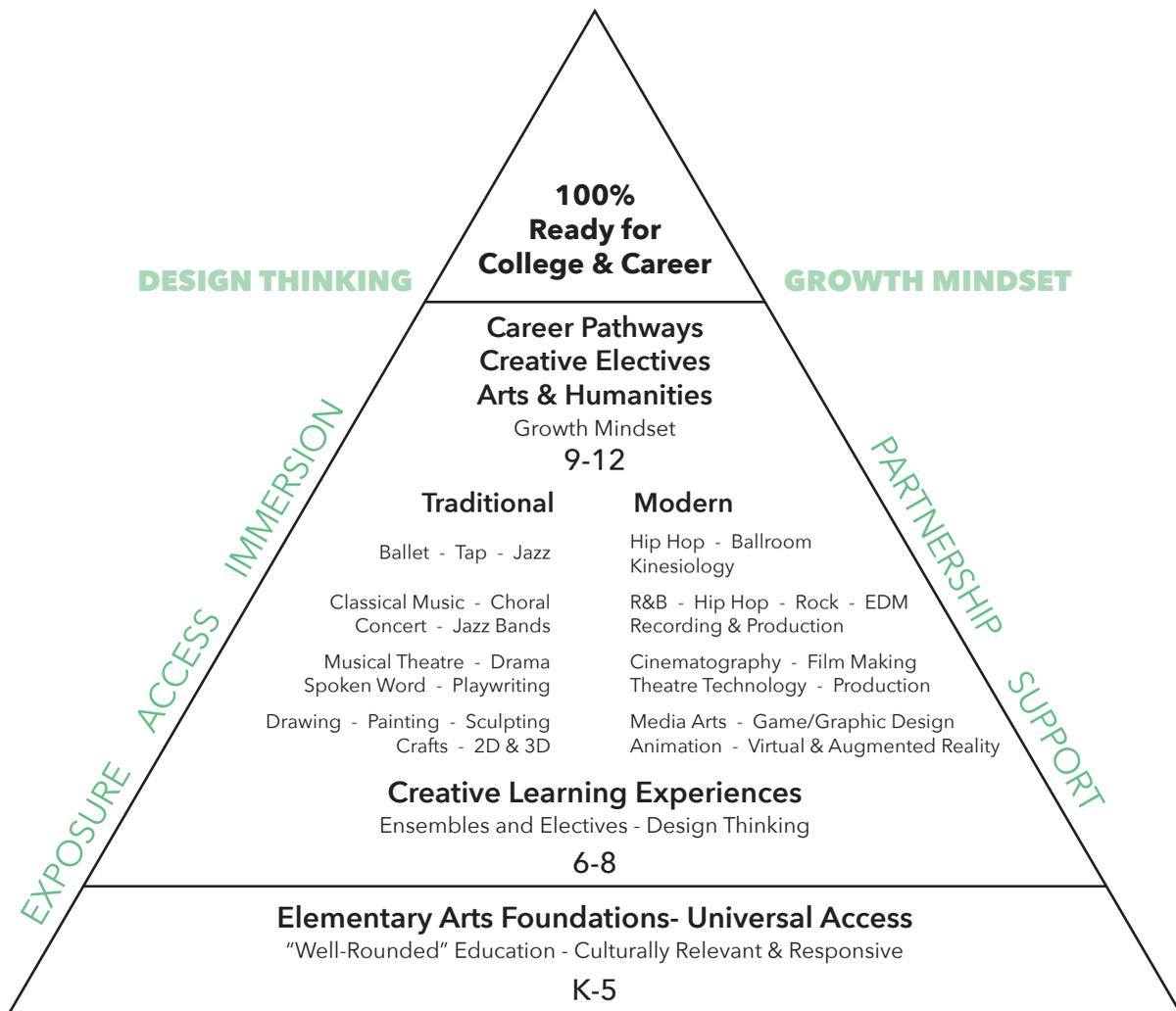
1 Catterall J, Dumais S, Hampden-Thompson G (2012) The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies. National Endowment for the Arts.

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.

# CREATIVITY GOALS

Aligned to School District of Philadelphia Anchor Goals

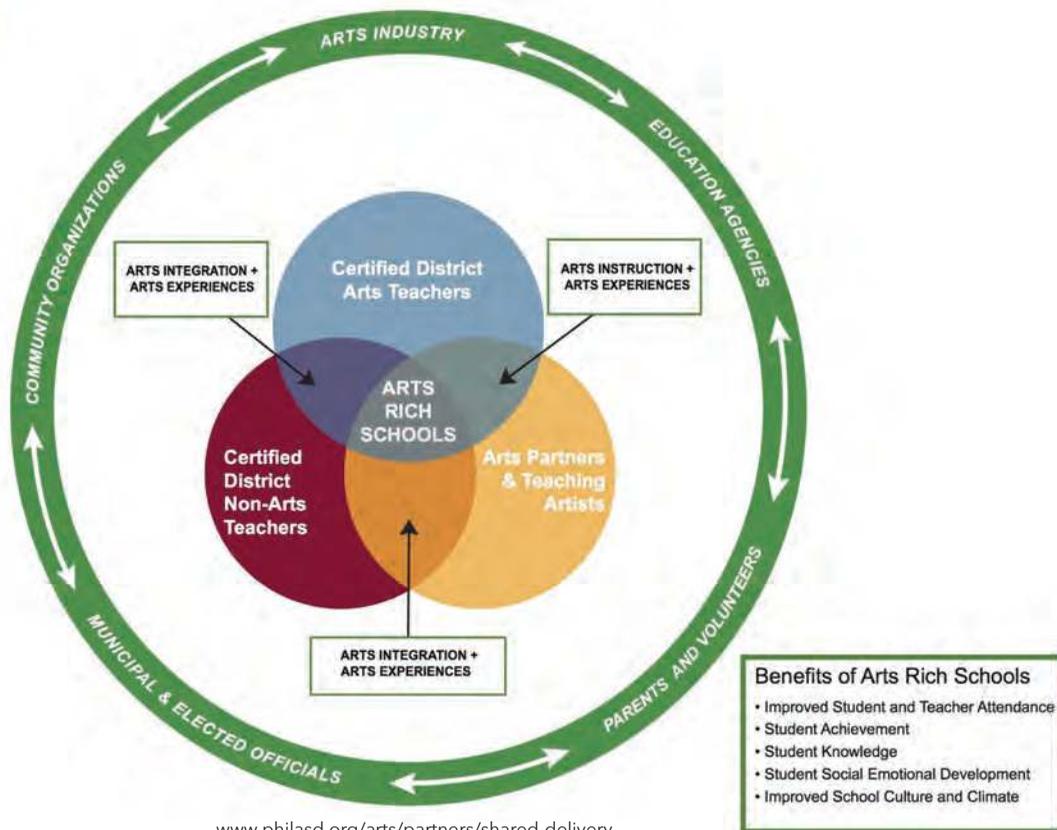
- All K-12 students **experience quality, sequential arts education** with a focus on college and career readiness.
- All K-8 students experience **arts-integrated instruction** across subjects and in support of students reading at grade level, through a “Shared Delivery” collaboration between certified arts educators, 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 who 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 8 conditions listed above are essential to ensuring success and sustainability in both resource-lean times and resource-rich times.**



# Lessons Learned: Successes and Challenges

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LESSON

01

## EACH SCHOOL SHOULD ESTABLISH A PLANNING TOOL.

- The planning tool document is essentially an electronic or hard-copy binder that inventories: plans for implementation, monthly meeting agendas, flyers, teacher lesson plans, budget expenditures, and assessments with all data. (including images of student art projects, musical presentations, etc.)
- The purpose of the binder is to provide a structure to help schools assess their progress, track new learning and document their path towards their goals.
- It will also serve as a Blueprint for best practices that can be spread and shared.

LESSON

02

## SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION NEEDS TO BOTH LEAD AND BE AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE COLLABORATIVE TEAM.

- The principal should designate a point person to ensure the logistics of doing the art-rich school model are addressed. 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, both to and from the administration. (Suggestion: weekly emails with open questions regarding the vision and goals? Google docs to share work)
- The principal should ensure there is regular process for oversight and support. It might include classroom visits, check-ins, examples of student work (if applicable), evaluation of effective practice, cheerleading.
- The principal should plan for professional development for staff on arts-enriched education must be created and implemented.
- The principal should regularly highlight successes of the project through parent/staff newsletters, announcements, displays, etc.

LESSON

03

## REGULAR TEAM MEETINGS ARE A MUST.

- Planned 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.")
- Each team member should attend each team meeting with an update and report on their work. Evidence of student work will enhance the meetings.
- Meeting should involve a discussion of art-rich curriculum pedagogy revolving around an essential question (ex: what does an arts-enriched school look like?)

LESSON

04

## INCLUDE STUDENT VOICE.

- Have student leaders or student officers design a survey to determine student attitude about the arts and their school. Survey should also elicit their opinions on future projects. Midpoint another student survey could collect feedback about how students view the program.
- If applicable have students vote on their arts projects.

LESSON

05

## ALIGN FUNDS TO SUPPORT THE VISION AND PLAN.

- Develop a clear process for creating the budget with school team and considering how recurring expenses are built into the baseline school-based budget for future years.
- Design a process for tracking expenditures and documenting purchases

LESSON

06

## DESIGN AN EVALUATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE.

- Create a quantifiable rubric to measure and track student growth in areas where data is available. (examples include attendance data, climate issues/data, student engagement in projects to completion, academic assessment scores...)
- Create a timeline that reviews outcomes at midpoint and endpoint.
- Results of the evaluation need to inform course-correction or redesign.

LESSON

07

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

- Summer preparation meetings are key. It is advisable to pay staff for meetings and preparation time.
- Planning should articulate the goals and vision for the project and create timelines, budget requests, program design with assessment.

LESSON

08

## PLAN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING.

- It is advisable to plan professional development that helps teaching staff develop and 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

09

## CREATE EXTERNAL VISIBILITY THAT BRINGS RECOGNITION TO STUDENTS.

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

LESSON

10

## 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 First Three Picasso Arts Rich Schools and Their Stories

Their visions, their school-wide commitment, and their use of resources.

## Establishing a clear **VISION** with measureable **GOALS**:

Three School District of Philadelphia schools received PCCY Picasso Project School-Based Grants for the 2018-2019 year, for the purpose of cultivating arts-rich learning environments. Each of the three schools established unique visions for their projects. Their vision and goals addressed their individual school and student needs, by expanding and increasing the arts education in their buildings. The success of the program goals were both measurable and anecdotally quantifiable.

### School A- Cook-Wissahickon School

Cook-Wissahickon School created a vision for the arts that was born out of the necessity to engage the middle grades in creative projects which developed student voices and student choice. Their secondary goal was to improve middle grades attendance and school climate.

Central to their arts vision was the need to develop curriculum to keep the school competitive in their community, where enrollment in other institutions was affecting and sometimes limiting their student body.

The elective arts program both embodied a goal of creating a stronger student and family affiliation with their school and generating student enthusiasm for attending school daily. Additionally, school staff expressed the need to create a path to hook middle grades students back into an academic mind-set at the end of their daily lunch periods. The arts program was able to fill that need and was seen as an engaging tool to inspire students, and to develop their voices.

**"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

The administration scheduled a "zero" period for immediately after lunch. Four days a week, student would travel directly to their art elective classes. 12 staff members (both classroom teachers, specialist teachers, community volunteers) divided 161 students. This meant classes ranged from as low as 9 students to as high as 15 students daily. The electives courses included bucket drumming, fiber art design, ceramics and sculpture design, origami, pointillism workshop, Spanish culture and storytelling, and recycled art making. This choice was repeated for a new group of students halfway through the year.

A showcase of the work was held both in January and May. It drew parents from the whole school to see smaller workshops in classrooms and larger demonstrations in the gym.

Measurements (not limited to): improvement in student attendance, improvement in student engagement in school, providing career choices for students, providing student voice, improvement in climate issues (no suspensions since October 2018, higher attendance rates).

## School B- Tilden Middle School

Tilden Middle School created a vision that involved improved academic success, increased performing arts opportunities, and improved school climate.

Tilden is located in the southwest section of Philadelphia. Their vision for their Picasso project arose from the challenges they faced. Challenges included a student body which is made up of a 19% special needs population, and a 22% population of new African immigrants. From a school survey of students, two issues were loud and clear. Students expressed the need for more academic support, and students overwhelmingly wanted to feel safe from bullying. At several focus groups, students expressed that the reasons for bullying were largely due to cultural differences at Tilden.

**"I can see a shift in student's energy in literacy class. Some of my most disengaged students, are now writing original poetry and songs, and are thinking about poetic works in deep ways. In short they are involved in their academic work."**

-Camille Banks, 5th Grade Literacy Teacher  
Tilden Middle School

Teachers and administration grasped both of these issues for their students and saw the Picasso project as an opportunity to tap into the potential in their students. They designed a poetry, song and rap curriculum unit that would allow students to tell their stories and celebrate their cultures. Their vision was based in the 5th and 7th grades literacy classrooms. Teachers taught poetic genre, inferencing, imagery, and drawing conclusions. Teachers made a space for students to create their own personal poetry. Visual imagery for their original work was followed up in the art room. The music teacher helped to create performance pieces. The ArtistYear fellow was

able to organize small group pullouts to work with individual students and used the WHY media lab to edit photos to accompany their written work.

For the end of the year students exhibited their work at a heritage week celebration. Students exhibited their original poems and accompanying videos in the first floor hallways.

Measurements: (not limited to) increased academic skills in reading and writing, which included poetic literary analysis, inferencing skills, and creative writing. Additionally, measurements included improved attendance, and a decrease in climate issues (the school reports a decrease in serious incidents).



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

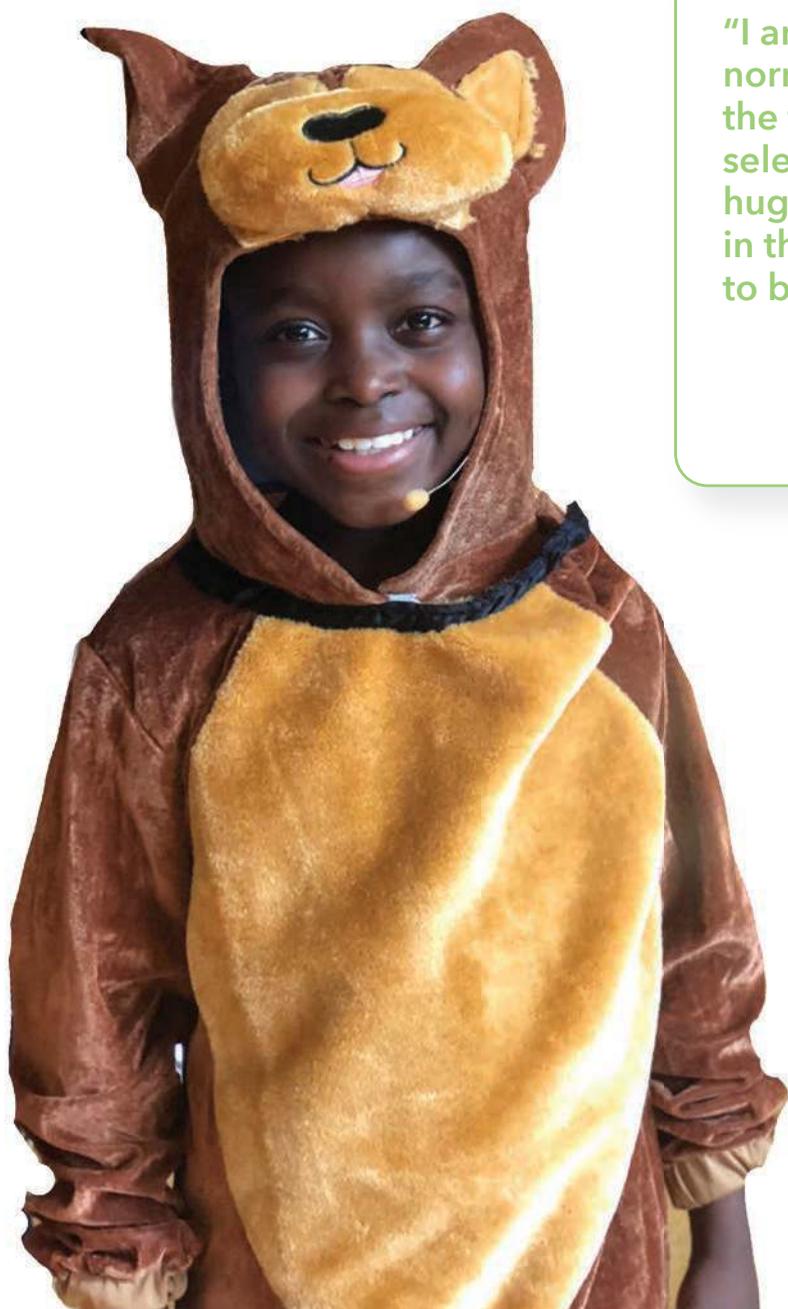
## School C- Overbrook Education Center

Overbrook Education Center created a vision for student engagement, academic rigor, and building student self-esteem. The large visually impaired population and large special education population provided the impetus for expanding the performing arts, that would allow all students in the school access.

Previously the school had a small performing arts program which survived on selling t-shirts and pretzels in order to put on small performances. The school staff saw the important impact on the self-esteem on the most fragile students when they participated in music and dance and drama. This propelled the vision to use the grant to increase a performing arts program. The inclusivity of special needs and visually impaired students was central to this vision. The community involvement in this vision helped to expand the project. Neighbors volunteered to teach drama and dance to support the program.

**"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 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



The goal was a full production of a show (The Wiz) which would be tied to curricular themes and skill development in their classrooms. On all half days (early dismissal days) teachers were provided with academic lessons that both built literacy skills and deepened thematic understanding of the production. The music and art teachers worked with every class on the elements of the production so that the whole school was familiar and connected to the performing arts project.

Measurements: (not limited to) increased student participation in the performing arts among all student groups, and student academic success by engaging in thematic lessons (30% of the student population is involved in the production).

*An Overbrook Education Center Student in costume for The Wiz*

## Establishing a school-wide commitment to an arts-enriched education by implementing a collaborative approach:

Building a school-wide commitment to an arts-enriched program means inviting all voices to embrace the vision, and then to participate in planning, implementation, and assessment of the arts project. The three schools approached collaboration in variety of formats.

### School A- Cook-Wissahickon School

Cook-Wissahickon, led by Principal Lowe, gathered all teachers from their middle grades, including all specialists (PE and computer, etc...), in order to collaborate on an elective program for their middle grades. They discussed the idea of an end of day period for the arts. Ultimately, they agreed that if they scheduled an after-lunch period instead, that this program would help in transitioning students from lunch to academics. This inclusive approach of all staff also allowed for lower class sizes.

The process began by asking students to voice their choices for elective courses. Students were then asked to respond to a menu of choices with their first, second and third choices. Students were rostered to their courses with one of their choices. Mid-school year students again selected courses and were re-rostered.

The teaching staff was then charged with creating elective courses. Students courses ranged from performance-based Shakespeare activities, photography, and ceramics, to workshops in Karate. Community partners became visiting artists as well.

The principal designed a middle grades roster schedule that reflected a “zero” period after lunch four days a week for the electives. Immediately after lunch the students would attend their arts elective courses.

Parents turned out in great numbers to view the winter showcase student work. The success of the elective program was a direct result of a collaborative approach between staff, administration, students, and community. The end of year program took place in May.

### School B- Tilden Middle School

Tilden Middle School’s program, led by Principal Johnson, arose out of the need to find ways to engage students in their academic program, give students a voice, and tap into their creativity. Teachers in grades 5 and 7, in addition to the art and music teachers began to collaborate and plan together with students to create spoken word curriculum, that resulted in performance and publishing opportunities. They included the WHYY media lab and deployed the ArtistYear Fellow to provide additional support. This collaborative approach infected student enthusiasm and promoted their buy-in.

After implementing original poetry and rap lessons in the classrooms, the art and music teacher designed projects that connected their written work to the arts. The purchase of student cameras allowed for students to enhance their work and the use of the media lab allowed students the editing and creation of videos. There was an end of the year showcase and assembly at the end of May for families and students.

## School C- Overbrook Education Center

Overbrook Education Center's Principal Foote, led the way for a collaborative approach by meeting with teachers in various grades, including the music and art teachers, to meet along with active parents, and brainstorm ways to upgrade the performing arts at OEC. Parents volunteered to teach dance and acting.

This collaborative approach evolved from the vision of an all-inclusive project in which students who were special needs would have an opportunity to participate.

Teachers volunteered to design thematic curriculum for all core classes during the district scheduled half-days. Lessons on those days reflected the themes from the year-end production. This collaborative approach developed a school-wide wave of participation.



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

## Use of **RESOURCES** and Use of **TIME**

The intentional design of school scheduling combined with the distribution of resources is the critical glue to making a school-wide arts program thrive. Each school needed to develop a coherent schedule, a timeline, and a budget that reflects their goals. Schools made purchases that could sustain their project for many years.

### School A- Cook-Wissahickon School

Cook-Wissahickon used their roster (schedule) to create a zero period following the middle school lunch period, for their elective courses. This scheduling addressed the issue of student engagement when transitioning from lunchtime to classroom time. Four days a week, students attend their arts small group electives directly from their lunch period. This resulted in students moving from lunch into a creative project and then later moving into their academic courses with less transition issues.

**Resources** were divided between purchasing supplies and using community artists to help teach the electives alongside the school staff. Purchases concentrated on equipment that could be used for many years. Musical equipment and speaker systems as well, as on-line student licenses for projects were purchased. Contracts included not only artists, but yoga and fitness trainers.

### School B- Tilden Middle School

Tilden Middle **scheduled** a combination of classroom time, pullout time for small groups, and afterschool programs, which reflected their goals of their visual arts and spoken word projects. Students in 5th and 7th grades were given a variety of settings in which to work on poetry, spoken word, and creative writing.



*Tilden students display their photographic poetry project with Elizabeth Hasier, ArtistYear Fellow*

This meant scheduling part of their 90-minute literacy block for poetry and writing several days a week. In addition, the art and music teachers, as well as the media lab allowed students to embellish their work with imagery and visual projects with individual opportunities for work. The scheduling was an important piece of this project. The work of the ArtistYear Fellow was very important to both help teachers and art specialists to coordinate their student projects. The Fellow also pulled small groups of students and worked on their poetry and spoken word writing and photographic imagery.

**Resources** were spent on classroom poetry texts, writing supplies, journals, and media enhancing equipment such as student cameras, and printers.

## School C- Overbrook Education Center

Overbrook Education Center **scheduled** their arts program for both after school art-rich clubs and during scheduled early dismissal day mornings. The project revolved around a performing arts theatre production which involved music, dance, and drama workshops for students.

The other scheduling involved classroom work on themes and reading that the whole school participated in on district scheduled early dismissal days. This solved the issue of teaching meaningful content on schools' days which were typically both rushed often less meaningful. The preparation of curriculum and activities that deepened the performing arts project in each grade created school-wide enthusiasm and contributed to academic literacy success.

The grant **resources** are spent on set and theatre design. The school purchased lighting and sound equipment with the goal of many years of sustained use. The next few years will increase the stage production capabilities.

## Conclusions:

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This Blueprint represents an on-going process to help 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 model 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](mailto:picassoproject@pccy.org) or [arts@philasd.org](mailto:arts@philasd.org).*



