

## Preparing our Students to be Effective American and Global Citizens

In order for our students to succeed outside the classroom, they need to be engaged and taught essential academic and life skills inside the classroom. Teaching in a way that engages students through movement, music, and various forms of artistic expression recognizes that students learn in many ways and leads to a deeper level of understanding in academic content. Arts integration also provides an avenue for learning valuable skills in confidence, communication, and collaboration.

We can prepare our students for the increasingly global economy and workforce by exposing them to many world cultures, by building teamwork skills, and by teaching them to think creatively and critically. These are the skills that are built in an arts-integrated classroom, and that will give our students a competitive edge in life beyond the classroom.

**“Creative thinking, effective communication, and collaborative work have been identified as necessary skills for the workforce, along with the fundamental ability to read, write, and deal with numbers.”**

-- Ann M. Galligan, Northeastern University

## Arts Integration Schools in DC

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*Integration* is the key to an Arts Integration theme school. Rather than being a class that students attend a few times a week, the arts – movement, dance, visual arts, music, and other forms -- are woven into instruction in all subjects. To flourish in an Arts Integrated classroom a student need not have any particular skill or talent in the Arts; the Arts are simply used as a tool to engage the whole student – mind and body -- in the learning process. In an Arts Integrated school, students experience the arts as a way of life, as tools for self-expression and communication, as a vehicle for discovering diversity in the world around them, and as an entry point for learning and exploring complex ideas.

### District Goals for Arts Integrated Schools

*To engage students of all learning styles in the classroom and to promote deeper learning of core subjects through integrating the arts into instruction.*

- Advance student achievement in reading, math, and other core subjects through active and creative participation in the classroom.
- Increase student engagement in the classroom and overall attendance at school.
- Create a positive classroom environment in which students cultivate respect for each other and build a sense of community as they encourage each other to take risks in artistic expression and communication.
- Provide valuable professional development in innovative teaching strategies and curriculum design to support teachers and build their confidence in using the arts in the classroom.
- Conduct appropriate research that measures both the quantitative and qualitative impact of the arts in the classroom.

### A Glance into an Arts-Integrated Second Grade Classroom

On Friday morning, Ms. Williams begins class with vocabulary from *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock*, the book they have been reading. Vocabulary is one of the hardest parts of reading for Kira, but Ms. Williams says that it is “the key that unlocks the book,” so she knows that it’s important. When Ms. Williams begins the lesson by saying that they are going to look at Juicy Words in the book today, Kira giggles. How can a word be juicy?

The students begin by compiling a list of words they don’t know from the book, then Ms. Williams gives them the next instruction. For each word, they are to come up with an action or way of speaking the word that will help them remember its meaning. Kira’s word to act out is “tender” and she decides to pretend she is holding a kitten and petting the soft fur. The class follows her lead and repeats the word in soft voices: “tender.” By the end of the list she has decided that her favorite words are tender, wicked (said in a strained voice with a low laugh afterward), and magic (spoken in a whisper with wide eyes while tapping the air with an imaginary wand). Ms. Williams reads the book again and asks them to do the actions when they hear the new words...

Walking back in the classroom after lunch, Kira hears the word “fractions” and groans, remembering how confusing they had been last year. Again, though, she is surprised and interested when Ms. Williams has them sit in a circle on the floor and hands out small handheld drums! On the board Ms. Williams had drawn a line of music with three measures. The first contains a whole note with “1/1” written above it, the next show two half-notes and is labeled “1/2,” the third has four quarter notes and “1/4.” As they beat out “fractions” on their drums, fractions become something that Kira can hear as well as see pictorially and numerically. Although she’s not great at keeping the beat, the idea of a fraction is beginning to make more sense...

## Arts Integration school design within the Effective Schools Framework

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The Effective Schools Framework will provide a basic structure for the new design of Arts Integrated schools. Below is a description of the arts integration implications within each core element of the Framework. This basic design is intended to be a starting point for the more detailed school-specific design requested in the application process.

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### ***Element 1: Teaching and Learning***

As previously stated, *integration* is the key to the Arts Integration theme school. The arts are infused in the classroom so that learning – in any subject – comes alive for the students. Throughout the process of designing and teaching a new curriculum that integrates the arts, the expectation still applies that the curriculum will be of high-quality and will be aligned to state standards. This includes carefully planning assessments that evaluate both the unique goals of the integrated curriculum and the established standards. The data collected from these evaluations will be essential to determining the impact that arts integration is having on student achievement and to continuously improving instruction.

Arts integration is in itself a high-impact teaching strategy as it engages and reaches students of various learning styles in each lesson or unit. Through increased engagement, motivation, and creative exposure to different ways of learning, arts integration becomes a useful tool for advancing the achievement of both students who struggle and those who excel in a traditional classroom. The use of the arts also helps to produce a positive classroom environment by promoting collaboration and respect for peers.

### ***Element 2: Leadership***

Successfully implementing a new theme across a school requires strong leadership from the school administration and a core group of teachers willing to give their time and expertise to setting vision and aligning other teachers. The whole-school approach provides the school faculty with a professional network so that they can learn together, support each other, and collaborate as they employ a new approach to teaching. This network will be strengthened as the school leadership sets a common vision and builds time for ongoing professional development, collaborative planning, and reflection into the teachers' schedules.

The staffing model for Arts Integration schools will build off of the Comprehensive Staffing Model and will include an Arts Integration coordinator or designated resource teacher. This teacher will be a key resource in helping oversee planning for interdisciplinary units, supporting the teachers as they learn the new pedagogy, and coordinating the in-class residencies with teaching artists.

# The Design

## ***Element 3: Job-Embedded Professional Development***

Thorough and engaging professional development is the cornerstone of an arts integration program's success at the school level. Intensive professional development will begin during the summer and continue in the form of in-class residencies with teaching artists acting as coaches throughout the year. Both forms of training will be essential supports as teachers are introduced to the theory and pedagogy that drives arts integration and as they implement the arts into their classrooms. Frequent collaboration with other teachers in their grade level, within their school, and in other arts integration schools across the district will provide another level of reinforcement as teachers begin to take new risks in their classrooms.

## ***Element 4: Resources***

The logistical implications of transitioning to an arts integrated program include a school's curriculum design, instructional materials, budget, and other programs. The DCPS central office will work to support the transition through coordinating partnerships for arts-integrated professional development and curriculum design, and by providing dedicated funding for necessary materials.

The budget for the transition year and the first two years of the Arts Integration program will be standard across all arts integrated schools and will include an Arts Integration Coordinator or Resource Teacher, start-up funds, and materials. Although the overall amount will be consistent, there will be some flexibility for particular needs or adjustments at the school level.

## ***Element 5: Safe and Effective Learning Environment***

The transition into an arts integrated school will affect many aspects of a school's structure and culture. An arts integrated curriculum will open doors to new and meaningful partnerships for out-of-school time programs, field trips, and extracurricular offerings. Potential adjustments to traditional scheduling and the increased focus on creativity and self-expression will transform the classroom and increase student engagement. When supported by strong leadership, these transitions will help to create and sustain a safe and effective learning environment.

Regarding admissions, it is our firm commitment that the theme schools will remain neighborhood schools. Overall admission will not be contingent on an application or lottery system. Discussions are in progress about the best way to provide access to theme schools for students from across the city and what percentage of non-neighborhood students will be able to enroll.

## ***Element 6: Family and Community Engagement***

Implementing arts integration at your school will require not only the involvement, but also the support of the local community, particularly enthusiasm from a strong group of parents. Official partnerships facilitated through the central office will be key resources for providing professional development and content expertise in curriculum design, but further support from arts education organizations for Out-of-School-Time programs or field trips to various performances will strengthen the rigor of the new curriculum and the whole-school culture.

## ***School Year 2009-10: Planning***

- Designate core Design Team which includes at least the principal or AP and the Local School Restructuring Team. Set meeting schedule to discuss design and implementation issues such as student schedules, teacher collaboration, professional development, partnership opportunities and budget designations.
- Introduce and align entire teacher corps to the vision for and process of becoming an Arts Integrated school.
- If possible, introductory professional development workshops should be held in the spring to increase the effectiveness of the summer institute.

## ***Summer 2010: Intensive Professional Development and Curriculum Design***

- Professional Development will include formal training in the content and pedagogy of an arts integrated curriculum.
- Curriculum design will be guided by expert partners and will be done in concert with teachers from other arts integration schools and multiple grade levels to ensure horizontal and vertical alignment and to establish networking collaboration between participating teachers.

## ***School Year 2010-11: Implementation***

- The scope and pace of roll-out will be determined by the school leadership and the design team. Schools may choose to transition the whole school in one year or start with a specific grade or cohort of teachers to be followed by the rest of the school in the second year. The application should address the principal's preferred roll-out sequence with some flexibility for input from the future design team.
- The second year will include concentrated evaluation of every element of the new school design both internally and from central office in order to gather a strong foundation of data for improvements.

## ***Summer 2011: Evaluation***

- The second summer will include further professional development for teachers – either continued training for second-year arts integration teachers or introductory training if the first year's roll-out did not include the whole school.
- The focus of the second summer will be on program evaluation and improvement.

## ***School Year 2011-12: Modification***

- Adjustments are made to the program based on end-of-year evaluations and summer planning.
- Budget adjustments and planning are complete in order to sustain Arts Integration programming within the normal school budget for future years (dedicated Arts Integration coordinator will continue to be funded centrally).
- A second round of evaluation at the end of the year will provide data for further adjustments.

## ***School Year 2012-13 and Beyond: Fine-Tuning***

- The overall program will be evaluated for impact at the end of three years. If the Arts Integration school designation is maintained after this evaluation, the cycle of evaluation, reflection, and improvement will continue. As ongoing research continues to add to the knowledge and pedagogy of integrating the arts into the classroom, each school's curriculum design, professional development, and program emphasis should undergo continual assessment and modification in order to stay relevant and effective.