



SAMPLER FAMILY INVOLVEMENT WITH STUDENTS IN THE ARTS

**What a boring place the world would be
Without music, dance and pictures to see.**

**With family and community partners, we share art of many kinds
To increase achievement, extend talents, and excite our minds.**

The arts bring students' learning to life. The visual and performing arts may captivate all students—even the most disengaged—by stimulating creativity, curiosity, imagination, and self-expression. With shrinking budgets and a persistent emphasis on achievement tests, many schools across the country have reduced the number of art and music teachers and programs. Yet, it is well accepted that the arts help students increase their understanding of other subjects. Art of many kinds enable parents and other family and community members to celebrate students' learning and talent development.

Community artists, actors, musicians, dancers, and arts organizations—including members of some students' families—may be invited to share their time and talents to introduce students to the arts. This includes performances that build students' appreciation for the arts; lessons to teach art, music, dance, and drama skills; and opportunities for students to perform for others.

In some schools, classroom teachers, parents, and community volunteers are filling gaps in children's art, music, dance, and drama experiences and appreciation. Many teachers include art projects in reading, math, science, and social studies classes to enable students to express their knowledge and skills in different forms.

In the best of worlds, guest artists from the community and teachers' incorporation of the arts in other subjects would be part of all students' experiences *along with* classes with official art, music, and drama teachers. In schools that are developing effective programs of school, family, and community partnerships, Action Teams for Partnership should work with art and other teachers to select and schedule practices that

feature students' creative work for families and the community to enjoy. Or, that enable family and community artists to share their talents to spark students' interests and activities.

In this *Sampler*, the featured activities were conducted by school-based Action Teams for Partnerships over many years and across grade levels. They illustrated how to engage parents and others with students in the arts to support students' learning and talent development. The activities engaged community dancers with students during the school day and other artists with students after school; created a whole-school theater production with many volunteers; enabled students to see and reproduce art styles of the masters; taught students crafts of many nations; organized museum visits for students and families; combined art and fashion; and more.

Improve Classroom Teaching

Individual teachers and grade-level teams may adapt these activities to engage their own students' families and community partners in the arts. For example, individual classroom teachers at any grade level could mount a drama production that engages every student on stage or behind the scenes and utilize the talents of parent and community volunteers. Any teacher could conduct art appreciation activities and art shows for parents and the public in connection with specific units of work in social studies, language arts, and other subjects.

The ten examples in this *Sampler*, arranged alphabetically, are a few of many excellent activities in NNPS annual collections of *Promising Partnership Practices*. See more at www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories0

This **Sampler** was developed by Marsha D. Greenfeld and Joyce L. Epstein.
© Baltimore: National Network of Partnership Schools, Johns Hopkins University, 2013.

NNPS thanks **MetLife Foundation** for its support to improve programs of family and community involvement.





Review of Research: Student, Family, and Community Connections in the Arts

Joyce L. Epstein, Director, NNPS

Children's art, music, dance, and theater bring smiles to everyone who sees a school concert, show, or exhibit. The visual and performing arts make significant demands on students, but also excite students and their audiences in unique and important ways. Studies indicate that the arts—in various forms—positively influence student achievement and attitudes about school. Three main kinds of studies have been conducted. Some focus on the association of a particular art with learning (e.g., music lessons and skills have been linked to students' math achievement). Other research examines effects of the integration of the arts across the curriculum. A few studies explore results of family and community engagement with students in art.

Art and learning. When art is taught well, students learn to think, create, and attend to details, as they develop skills in music, drama, and the visual arts. Students' emotional attachments to color, line, movement, and sound also may link to learning. A large study of adolescents using the NELS:88 data set reported a significant association between participation in the arts and student achievement, with the greatest gains in test scores for students from families with low income (Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999). A longitudinal study of students in economically-strapped families in after-school programs found that, compared to sports and other emphases, art activities had greater positive effects on students' academic skills (Heath & Roach, 1999). The California Alliance for Arts Education reported that arts education builds students' abilities to communicate and innovate, and contributes to students' college and career readiness.


Arts integration. Art fits well in other subjects because art demands that students concentrate, make decisions, consider aesthetics, and develop other skills and talents that reinforce subject-matter skills (Walker, Tabone, & Weltsek, 2011). For example, reading and writing may be strengthened when students draw, paint, or build an art piece related to a story. Compared to similar students, those whose teachers integrated art in other academic subjects had higher test scores, with the strongest effects for initially low-achieving students (Catterall & Waldorf, 1999; Ingram & Seashore, 2003). Evaluators of the *Developing Reading Education with Arts Methods (DREAM)*, which included guest artists to spark students' thinking, reported that, over four years, project students had higher scores on California standardized achievement tests than did students in control groups (Goldberg, 2013). The integrated arts also have been linked to higher student attendance, self-confidence, attitudes toward school, and later participation in and support for the arts.

Family and community engagement in art. Two aspects of partnerships with students in the arts include family-as-audience and family-as-participant. When students create art or perform music, dance, or theater for peers, families, and the community, they learn about discipline, the importance of practice and rehearsal, and the joy in others' enjoyment of the art work. Also, more and different parents may be engaged in helping children prepare for performances at home and as appreciative audience member at school (Rabkin & Redmond, 2004; Sikes, 2007).

TIPS Volunteers in Social Studies and Art prepares parents and community volunteers to discuss famous art prints with students in their social studies classes in the middle grades. The presentations integrate art and history and increase students' knowledge and appreciation of art. In a study of over 400 students, researchers found that students increased their awareness of art, developed attitudes toward and preferences for different styles of art, and were able to express their likes and dislikes in their critiques of the art prints (Epstein & Dauber, 1995). The approach helped organize productive parent volunteers in the middle grades. A *TIPS* manual and prototypes for social studies and art volunteers are available from NNPS at www.partnershipschoools.org in the *TIPS* section.

The results of studies of the arts, family engagement, and student learning reject narrow views that art is "outside" the main work of schools. Rather, the arts and family and community engagement may combine to make school an active place of learning and motivate more students to remain in school.

References

- Catterall, J. S., Chapleau, R., & Iwanaga, J. (1999). Involvement in the arts and human development. Pp. 1-18 in E. B. Fiske (Ed.), *Champions of change: The impact of the arts on learning*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership.
- Catterall, J., & Waldorf, L. (1999). Chicago arts partnerships in education: Summary evaluation. Pp. 46-62 in E. B. Fiske (Ed.), *Champions of change: The impact of the arts on learning*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership.
- Epstein, J. L., & Dauber, S. (1995). Effects on students of an interdisciplinary program linking social studies, art, and family volunteers in the middle grades. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 15, 114-144.
- Goldberg, M. (2013). *Research finds that art boosts reading*. California State University-San Marcos: Retrieved 6-5-13 from <http://www.csusm.edu/news/topstories/articles/2012/02/dream.html#csusm%20news>
- Heath, S. B., & Roach, A. (1999). Imaginative actuality: Learning in the arts in the nonschool hours. Pp. 36-44 in E. B. Fiske (Ed.), *Champions of change: The impact of the arts on learning*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership.
- Ingram, D., & Seashore, K. (2003). *Arts for academic achievement: Summative evaluation report*. Unpublished report. Center for Applied Research and Education Improvement, College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota.
- Rabkin, N., & Redmond, R. (2004). Putting the arts in the picture. Pp. 127-152 in N. Rabkin & R. Redmond (Eds.), *Putting the arts in the picture: Reframing education in the 21st century*. Chicago: Columbia College Chicago.
- Sikes, M. (2007). *Building parent involvement through the arts*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Walker, E., Tabone, C., & Weltsek, G. (2011). When achievement data meet drama and arts integration. *Language Arts*, 88, 365-372.
- 



After-School Enrichment Program

Frederick Law Olmsted School #64/56
Buffalo, New York

Parents often spend a great deal of time, energy, and money trying to find constructive after-school activities for their children. At Frederick Law Olmsted School, however, that is no longer necessary. The After-School Enrichment Program provides an hour of creative activities and experiences every day, while furthering the school's goals and preparing students for required tests.

During two six-week sessions, about 100 Olmsted students participated in crafts, yoga, and cooking, as well as many other fun and educational activities. Parents and community partners of the two-site elementary-middle school contributed heavily to the successful program:

- The Explore and More Children's Museum conducted hands-on, culture-themed crafts activities.
- The Himalaya Institute provided a yoga instructor.
- The Darlene Ceglia Dance Project taught hip hop dancing, while the Buffalo Inner-City Ballet prepared beginning dancers well enough to perform in *The Nutcracker* at Shea's Performing Arts Center, downtown Buffalo's largest theater.
- Two professional chefs taught fifth and sixth graders how to read recipes and safely prepare a variety of dishes.

More than 20 parents volunteered their time and talents. One parent who works as an art teacher in another district came in on her day off to teach pop-up bookmaking, another taught knitting—using rhymes to take the

students through the steps. A group of parents brought in board games for students to play with their friends.

Although Olmsted had many reasons to create an after-school enrichment program, two topped the list—reinforcing the skills needed to do well on the ELA and TerraNova assessments and increasing the role of parents and community partners to meet some of the goals of the school's Comprehensive School Education Plan. The activities the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) designed for the enrichment program support the learning skills necessary for improvement on those required tests.

The ATP advertised the after-school program through Olmsted's weekly parent information packet, as well as through phone calls and e-mails. To cover costs, the school charged \$10 per student for each six-week session. The fee was waived for families who could not afford to pay it.

The level of participation and attendance showed that the after-school program met a need and also tapped the significant resources available to the school. The program created a greater sense of community and pride in the school. Olmsted also furthered its mission of fostering higher-level thinking skills, creative problem solving, and habits that support life-long learning through the differentiated learning experiences provided.



All the World's a Stage

*Bullard TALENT K-8 School
Fresno, California*

All the world's a stage at the Bullard TALENT Middle School! Every year, the K-8 magnet school produces and presents a middle school musical seen by more than 4,000 school children, families, and community residents. These highly anticipated productions are the result of collaborations of the visual and performing arts faculty, students, families, and the community. Without the organization, planning and hands-on participation of hundreds of volunteers, the plays would not be the tremendous success that they have become.

The excitement begins early in the school year. At Back to School Night, parents and students learn about the new production and the many opportunities for involvement. During the first week of school, students in grades 6-8 participate in a four-day Visual and Performing Arts clinic to familiarize them with the school's course offerings and to introduce them to the selected play's script, music, choreography and stagecraft.

Staff and community specialists act as judges for two sets of auditions. Shortly after the judges announce the final casting, the school holds a parent meeting to encourage parental leadership and to assign volunteering activities.

Teachers, staff, administrators and community members play many supporting roles. Teachers direct the play, while administrators take the lead on scheduling and public relations. The larger community donates goods and services and attends the performances, providing support for students. The school schedules 14 performances, many of them for school groups.

"I have been the volunteer costume designer for the past ten years," said one former parent. "My children have long since left Bullard TALENT, but I am so grateful for what it gave them and believe so strongly in what it gives all the kids, that I will continue to do what

I can as a member of the community to make it happen." This is representative of the spirit and participation that keeps the shows going on.

Planning such a huge event is not easy. Because it is a magnet school, Bullard TALENT draws its students from all over Fresno. School leaders find that it is sometimes a challenge to bring the school together for a complex, semester-long project.

Scheduling and keeping students on track are additional challenges. Teachers and parents work hard to help students stay healthy, energetic and motivated throughout the process so they do not feel overburdened.

"I have been able to use many values such as discipline, self-control, perseverance and respect. I know that with what I have learned from doing these plays, I will be even more prepared for what's to come," said an eighth-grader.

Despite the hard work and long hours from everyone involved, the productions continue to inspire pride and commitment. "This event consumes so many students, teachers, families, former students and who-knows-who, that it boggles the mind," said a first-grade teacher at Bullard. "It is with pride that I volunteer my time in this absolutely incredible event. I wouldn't miss it."



Art Extravaganza

Discovery School #67

Buffalo, New York

Where can you see a child's rendition of a Picasso, a Monet or a Warhol? The Art Extravaganza Show organized by Discovery School No. 67 is a good bet. Students there learned about great masters in art and emulated the artists' styles in their own work.

This show tied in nicely with the school's motto, "Hands-on, Minds-on," which conveys the school's philosophy of center-based learning. Opened in 1999 with 36 students in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, the school now has multiple sections of pre-K through seventh grades and three self-contained classrooms for children with autism.

For the past several years, the Discovery School has been developing a Music and Art Appreciation Enrichment Program. Students study classical musicians as well as great artists. The school wanted the children to showcase the exciting things they were learning and experiencing. Parents and teachers received a grant to work in partnership with Buffalo's Albright-Knox Art Gallery.

First, parents, teachers and students from Buffalo State College visited the art gallery with Discovery students so that they could see original art and become more familiar with artists' styles. Students learned about Pablo Picasso, Georgia O'Keefe, Andy Warhol and others.

Classroom teachers worked with the art teacher, providing background on the artists and helping the children research and create their own works of art. Positive parent participation in school increased as parents mounted, labeled and displayed artwork from more than 500 students, pre-K to seventh grade.

The culminating event, an art show at the school, featured work done by students in a "master's style." More than 300 parents, other

family members and community partners attended the First Annual Art Show Extravaganza. The students were proud of their art work and were glad that so many people came to see their work. The turnout boosted students' self esteem.

One of the project's major challenges was finding display space for the students' work. This was solved when a parent's employer donated several large, portable display walls. The event also required a lot of planning. Parents, teachers and paraprofessionals volunteered many hours. The show cost approximately \$100, which the enrichment grant covered.

The project helped students develop higher-level thinking skills, gain a greater appreciation for the arts and learn socially acceptable behavior in a museum. The art gallery staff saw children from the city in a more positive light, even commenting on their level of interest in the arts and their excellent behavior. "I was amazed that pre-K students were able to explain how [Jackson] Pollock had made one of the paintings at the gallery by standing on a ladder and spilling paint."



ART IN THE HIGHLANDS

HIGHLANDS MIDDLE SCHOOL KENNEWICK, WA

At Highlands Middle School, art appreciation is not limited to museum-goers and art collectors. With the help of dedicated parents, teachers, administrators, and local artists, Art in the Highlands turned middle schoolers and their family partners into art students by day, muralists by night.

Art in the Highlands took a two-pronged approach to arts education: learning and doing, during the school day and in an evening community event. To creatively implement the *learning* component, Highlands Middle School received district approval to invite 11 local artists to share their skills with sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students. The artists taught students many exciting skills, including pottery, water color, photography, interior design, fiber art, graphic design, mixed media, and others.

Learning about art during school hours was only the first step. The *doing* component continued. First, students worked with their families to paint tiles for a new, permanent mural to decorate the school's entrance. Second, one evening, community members were invited to the school from 5 to 8 p.m. to purchase five-dollar tiles. Then, small groups of community members decorated tiles to add to the mural, which also included the school's mission statement.

In the spirit of true artistic partnership, everyone worked together to offset the \$300 cost of this activity. Donations from a local contractor and artist, as well as discounts at a craft warehouse and commercial crafts store, helped cover the cost of materials. For students and families who could not afford to buy a tile, one generous parent donated \$100.

The ATP, PTO, and afterschool program coordinators worked together throughout the Art in the Highlands planning process, determining its theme, soliciting artists, planning activities, making name tags, and writing thank-you notes. Parents attended weekly planning meetings for

two months, and volunteered their time to sell student- and family-created mural tiles during lunch for the week prior to the event.

Students in an after-school program also contributed to the planning process. They designed the logo for the project, which became the advertising symbol on the school website, in the local newspaper, on the school reader board, and on Facebook.

Art in the Highlands coordinators noted that other art-related activities will be conducted in the future. They plan to develop activities around the calendars of the local artists and the local artistic community, so that conflicts in schedules are avoided.

As the principal of Highlands Middle School explained, "In our classes, we are so focused on reading and math all the time that we want to make sure we had an opportunity to see that art is all around us, and it's in our lives every day." By bringing artists into the classroom, Art in the Highlands allowed teachers and artists to connect the visual arts with classroom-based math, science, reading, and entrepreneurial studies.

Art in the Highlands was a rich academic experience for students and an opportunity to create a beautiful project and lasting tribute to school, family, and community partnerships.



Arts Extravaganza Family Night

*Highwood Hills Elementary School
St. Paul, Minnesota*

Highwood Hills Elementary School has a diverse student body, with members of Somali, Hmong, Cambodian, Hispanic, Japanese, African American, and other heritages. Nearly two-thirds of these students are ELL. To celebrate its students' diverse backgrounds, the school created an Arts Extravaganza Family Night that featured fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students and their families showcasing their familial and cultural traditions. The night combined performances with hands-on interaction so that students could both observe and participate in the traditional activities.

The gym was set up with stations for making Hmong story cloths, Hmong New Year balls, Japanese origami, Hispanic tissue flowers, piñatas, Guatemalan kites, and henna painting. There were also several ethnic food stations. A Cambodian musician, the father of one of the students, performed traditional music. The evening culminated with a participatory performance by a local African American storyteller.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) publicized the Arts Extravaganza with fliers each student brought home. These fliers, which were written in four languages, included a tear-off RSVP slip. The ATP also posted fliers in area apartment buildings and made phone calls home to remind parents about the event.

The idea for the arts night was spearheaded by the schoolwide enrichment model teacher, who worked with the ATP, an arts-related school grant, and community members to create the event. The planners solicited the

teaching staff to come up with ideas and prepare material for the gym stations. Community organizations also contributed ideas and materials to the project, including cultural foods. The school asked parents to help run the gym stations, and some parents even provided cultural entertainment. The Arts Extravaganza cost approximately \$1,400 and was funded by part of a three-year US Department of Education grant, Title I funds, and donations from community members and parents.

Next year, the school plans to open the event to all grade levels. The Arts Extravaganza will have fewer stations, with larger work areas and more time for students to spend at each station. Also, to save on costs, the school will solicit more teacher and parent volunteers.

This practice brought the community into the school. The Arts Extravaganza promoted arts and artistic expression and encouraged families to share their experiences at home and in their communities. Thanks to activities like this, Highwood Hills has a positive climate, where its students' cultures are not only respected, but celebrated.



IMPRESSIONS

MEADOWVIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN

Meadowview Elementary's annual Impressions event gave an innovative twist to the time-honored format of the science fair, but focused on students' self-expression.

Every Meadowview student in grades K–5 is invited, once a year, to create an artistic project in one of the following categories: Visual Arts, Photography, Music/Dance, Literature, or Animation/Video. The variety of artistic media accommodates a range of individual talents. Entry is voluntary, but, this year, 147 students submitted projects—nearly a quarter of the student body.

On the evening of Impressions, parents, teachers, and staff joined the students in exploring the creative work of their peers. Since the Meadowview PTO first implemented Impressions in 1994, the event has expanded to include an inexpensive healthy dinner, as well as family learning opportunities. For example, in past years, the staff arranged for multi-media presentations, storytellers, math and reading exercises, mini-sessions on school initiatives, and team-building activities for the attendees.

The event was the finale of the project. Work got underway at least a month beforehand. Students were directly involved from the beginning. First, they were asked to contribute theme ideas (recent examples included Fairy Tales, Winter Fun, and Underwater Adventures). The entire student body voted on its favorite theme from among three finalists chosen by the committee. The student who suggested the winning theme received a gift certificate to a local bookstore.

Then, the PTO gave kick-off presentations in each classroom, explaining the theme and official rules. Students had three weeks to work on their projects at home. All work had to be created by the student.

On the day of Impressions, participating students received equal recognition: a certificate

and a button, which they wore proudly throughout the day.

For judging, there were two age groups in each category. Parents, teachers, and community members volunteered as judges. To preserve objectivity, parents reviewed only categories in which their children were not entered. Similarly, no teacher judged an age group in which they had students. Overall, 25 percent of the entries were recognized as winners.

The necessary funding was minimal—\$450, this year—and provided entirely by the PTO's annual magazine fundraiser. The partnership coordinator suggested that other schools that wanted to implement the program “start small and grow.”

In the end, students received some arts education to round out their core curriculum and also had an opportunity to demonstrate talents that may not otherwise be recognized in the classroom or on the playing field. The Impressions program, now a Meadowview tradition, continues to develop, reaffirming to students—as well as their parents and teachers—a more expansive sense of what they can do.



LEARNING THROUGH THE ARTS

CUYAHOGA COUNTY UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN CLEVELAND, OH

When schools have tough financial decisions to make, the arts and field trips are often the first to be put on the budget cutting block. The Cuyahoga County Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) wanted to ensure that young children and their families had opportunities to engage with the arts. In Learning through the Arts, various activities for parents and for children were conducted throughout the year. Families visited museums in the area, participated in performances at school, and worked together to create public art pieces that will be shown at early child care and education centers for years to come.

With a grant from the National Council of Jewish Women, UPK hosted an unusual Back to School Night as the first activity in Learning through the Arts. Families from all 27 UPK preschools visited for the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Western Reserve Historical Society, and Cleveland Botanical Gardens.

The evening started with a welcome from community leaders and a light meal for the whole group. Then, tour guides took students and families to their museums in small rotating groups. Families received passports that were stamped at each museum. At the end of the evening, they exchanged their fully-stamped passports for a backpack filled with supplies for their child. Families also listened to live music, and children received mini violin lessons.

School-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) picked up the theme by including art activities in their annual action plans for family and community involvement. Different schools planned art shows, family dance classes, Cleveland Orchestra field trips, family music classes at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Cleveland Playhouse performances at school, holiday concerts, and other exciting interactive activities.

A grant from the Bruening Foundation helped the UPK schools create public art. Along with partners from Young Audiences of Northeast Ohio (YANEO), UPK, ATP, and other school leaders invited students and families at school to create unique murals for their schools. Parents, children, extended family, and staff worked with YANEO artists to complete murals based on puzzles, mosaics, ceramic quilts, mixed media, everbloom, and literacy. A video of families working together on these murals was shown at the UPK November meeting, and the murals were one of the highlights of June's End of the Year Celebration with all UPK schools.

Across schools, over 1200 students, more than 350 parents, and more than 100 UPK, school, and community partners participated in and benefited from Learning through the Arts. One teacher commented, "I can't believe how many dads came out to help with the mural."

Students had many opportunities to express themselves with hands-on experiences in dance, mosaics, musical instruments, painting, drawing, and acting. Many parents have continued to volunteer at their child's school after their engagement with Learning through the Arts. Cuyahoga County is helping to create a community of young artists who can enjoy the arts in partnership with their families and schools.



SHMACK / FASHION MARKETING PARTNERSHIP

TALLWOOD HIGH SCHOOL VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

The fashion marketing partnership at Tallwood High School is a model collaboration. Since the fall of 2007, students in fashion marketing have been offered some upfront looks at the clothing industry by Todd Askins, the owner and founder of Shmack Clothing, a Virginia-based firm. Selecting and borrowing garments for their annual student fashion show, taking warehouse tours, and designing T-shirts for a design contest, the students have worked closely with Askins to deepen their understanding of what is involved in the fashion biz.

Askins, in turn, has tapped the students for constructive feedback on marketing, branding and design, and an inside track to his target market's thoughts on what he sells. "We are very pleased with the students' creative ability and hope to continue to work with . . . the fashion program for years to come," he said.

That would seem to be all right with the Tallwood Career and Technical Education (CTE) program that has about 80 students each year. As a CTE program, Fashion Marketing aims to provide students with skills to move successfully to postsecondary education or employment. Career exploration and preparation, internships, job shadowing opportunities, and leadership development are essential. The opportunities Shmack afforded the students greatly enhanced their classroom work.

The partnership began with the fall 2007 student fashion show—a requirement of the Advanced Fashion Marketing class. Students borrowed clothing from Askins' new lines. He and other employees helped the students put together their outfits and "the look" for the show. After that, Askins spoke to students about his high school years, the ups and down of his youth, the creative force behind his brand and key marketing decisions.

The partnership blossomed, with visits back and forth between school and Shmack offices.

Shmack's graphic designer worked with the students to develop a custom-designed, limited-edition Tallwood Fashion Shmack T-shirt, a marketing tool for the Tallwood program. With their \$14 purchases, the students paid for the production of the T-shirts.

The fashion show and design competition continued this school year, with Askins and members of his staff even more involved. The show was videotaped for airing on local television. "The word of mouth advertising generated from both the fashion show and the T-shirts ultimately led to the growth of the Fashion Marketing program," said the teacher who was instrumental in creating the partnership.

"Designing the T-shirts and [participating in] other promotional events have brought our class together to make such a strong team," said a student. "Other students see this partnership and not only want to join the class, but get more involved in school."

Others have noticed. The district superintendent and Virginia Beach Partnership Advisory Board recognized Shmack and Tallwood for their work together.

Rave reviews all around.



THE DANCING CLASSROOMS PROGRAM

A. A. NELSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LAKE CHARLES, LOUISIANA

Dance is an athletic and artistic endeavor that can entertain, educate, and excite its participants and its audience. For A. A. Nelson Elementary School, dance also is an annual activity that helps fifth graders learn many life lessons in the Dancing Classrooms program.

The goals of Dancing Classrooms is to increase fifth graders' self-respect, self-confidence, and respect for others through a series of 20 ballroom dance lessons. After Whistle Stop, a local non-profit organization, offered the program, the school became excited about the possibilities. The program gives children a chance to learn dance regardless of income or location. The school's Action Team for Partnerships, teachers, and administrators wanted students to have the opportunity to build social skills and improve physical health.

Dancing Classrooms runs the course of ten weeks, with two 45-minute lessons a week, starting in August. The instructors are called Teaching Artists and received dance training from Pierre Dulaine, founder of American Ballroom Theater and Dancing Classrooms.

The course starts with the basics: leading and following by dance partners, building dance repertoire, understanding and sharpening balance, and executing respectful positions moving to and from the dance floor. Then, students go into more depth learning moves and combinations of specific dances and the cultural heritage of each dance form, including dances from all over the world.

Dances include Merengue, Foxtrot, Waltz, Rumba, Tango, Swing, Heel-Toe-Polka, and selected line dances. As they learn the dances, students also have opportunities to improvise their routines. By creating dance movements within a dance form, they may really understand the artistic process of dancing. Students also increase trusting relationships with their partners, as they must work together to execute and master

standard and improvised moves. Thinking about dance and teamwork, one fifth-grade student commented, "I never thought I'd like to dance or even dance with a girl. After going through Dancing Classrooms, I realize now I really like it!"

At the end of the course, students perform dances for a large audience. This year, A. A. Nelson Elementary held a *Dancing with the Stars* event at a local auditorium. Students, dressed in their best clothes, showed off their fancy moves for parents, teachers, and others in attendance. Everyone was amazed by the abilities the fifth graders demonstrated. It was clear that the student partners worked well together and respected each other. Following the show, A. A. Nelson was invited to participate in the *Colors of the Rainbow Team Match* dance competition—and they took first place!

The founders of Dancing Classrooms, Pierre Dulaine and Yvonne Marceau, had this to say, "With Dancing Classrooms, we are able to reach children in existing classroom settings and address fundamental issues of mutual respect and self-esteem—issues that social dance puts into practice. We hope to inspire children through dance to do well, to respect one another, to be proud. This program is about more than dance, it is about teaching children to take a bow."



THE VAN GOGH CAFÉ

L'ETOILE DU NORD FRENCH IMMERSION SCHOOL SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

Third-graders at L'Etoile du Nord French Immersion School created their own Van Gogh Café to display their artwork, handmade books, and new-found knowledge of famous artists. The school library-turned-gallery attracted more than 75 parents and other family members to this daytime event. Students showcased what they learned and what they created during a non-fiction unit on the lives of famous artists that integrated reading, writing, publishing and presentation.

Students dressed as the artists they chose to study. Vincent Van Gogh, Mary Cassatt, and Georgia O'Keeffe were among those stopping by the café, where the youngsters presented original skits based on these and other artists' lives. In small groups, the students presented their knowledge of art, artists and cultural history by re-enacting tales from an art gallery, an artist's studio, an auction house, and chance meetings of the artists. The third-graders also wrote non-fiction chapter books, with each book focusing on one artist. These books, on display at the café, featured decorative papers and artworks.

The café began when the English Language Learners (ELL) teacher read *The Van Gogh Café* by Cynthia Rylant to third-graders. They enjoyed the book so much that they asked to create their own café. The third-grade teachers worked with the ELL teacher to design the unit and establish the café. The youngsters read about artists from many cultures, spanning continents and centuries. Then each chose one to research.

As the students did the intellectual work and wrote invitations to their families during a Writing Workshop, they had considerable help in putting together the café. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) solicited donations of food and materials. The team includes members of the arts partnership committee that explores how the school can integrate the arts into the curriculum. Because the school does not have a visual

arts teacher, it makes a concerted effort to study children's books about artists.

Team members also publicized the café in the school newspaper, and set up the tables, easels, and displays for the art gallery. An artist-in-residence, sponsored by the Parent Teacher Organization, helped students create marbled paper book covers. Families helped students create costumes and provided additional books, clothing, and other materials so that all students would be able to participate.

"I learned about Mary Cassatt and how she painted when not many women were allowed to be artists," said one student. "Everybody participated in the plays and they did them so nicely," said another. The parents said they enjoyed learning along with their children about the artists.

The Van Gogh Café had another outcome. Parents, teachers and community members saw first-hand how a French immersion school could challenge students to succeed in English Language Arts, as students demonstrated their competence in grade-level reading and writing in English.