



# Links & Threads

**A Newsletter for Arts Partners** Published by the Ohio Arts Council and the Ohio Department of Education **Volume 1 Issue 2**

*Links and Threads* is an electronic newsletter for district and school leaders who value arts learning as an integral part of the core curriculum. Its purpose is to assist school leaders in achieving the greatest advantage possible from the arts for their schools and districts. The publication will build upon the knowledge gained through the 2004 NEA Summer Institute for School Leaders, promote dialogue about the role of arts learning in school improvement, share success stories, and keep schools and districts informed about arts-related developments and opportunities.

## Leadership Voices

Elementary school students in the Lima City Schools understand culture and community more deeply after a month of learning activities that integrated the arts, social studies, and physical education. Mike Huffman, Director of Arts and Magnet Programs, says the centerpiece of their learning was several days spent interacting and performing with the Gullah Kinfolk—musicians and dancers descended from West African slaves who settled on the isolated islands and marshlands of the South Carolina coast.

“Such learning experiences—combining the arts with other ways of knowing to explore important themes that cut across the boundaries of disciplines—represent a powerful form of arts integration,” says Mary Campbell Zopf, director of the Ohio Arts Council’s Office of Arts Learning.

“Arts integration engages students cognitively, physically, and emotionally,” says Patricia Stuhr, chair of The Ohio State University’s Art Education Department. *(continued next page)*



*Students in the Lima City Schools deepened their understanding of culture and community with help from the Gullah Kinfolk.*

## SiteLines

*Participants are continuing the learning that began at last year’s Summer Institute*

**Hamilton City Schools** arts educators engaged in professional development focused on differentiating instruction in teaching the arts, integrating learning in the fine and language arts, and working with cognitively delayed students, says fine arts director Laurin Sprague.

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Working with the Institute for Education and the Arts, the **Columbus City Schools** is sponsoring professional development for school leaders on how the fine arts can reinforce literacy teaching and remediation. After seeing demonstrations using dance and music, principals were amazed and excited, says curriculum specialist Bonita Agnew.

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# Institute Reflections

by Eric Booth, author and artistic director for The Juilliard School

Arts integration is the hottest trend in American arts education. The ideas have been around for ages, and great teachers have been including arts experiences as a part of curricular learning since before there were schools. The current endeavor is to find the dynamic inter-relationship between learning in an art form and learning in a subject area, a relationship in which the learning goals of both are advanced beyond what they would be if separated.

Educators across the country are experimenting with new practices, becoming clearer about the ways to find the delicate balance that boosts student learning. We sometimes miss the mark. Some projects make the arts a handmaiden to the curricular goals—believ-

ing that the art is there to pep up a boring curriculum, and that the goal is higher test scores in the subject area. Conversely, sometimes the curricular connection is just an excuse to include a good arts project. The future lies in the middle, when BOTH goals are attained in an exciting back-and-forth learning process.

Having witnessed a lot of experimentation around the country, I can report a few things our field has learned.

*There is no set model to borrow and plug in.* The best work is particular to the individuals and specific passions of the educators involved. Certainly there are excellent models (happening all over Ohio), but the understanding and enthusiasm (and professional development) of the teachers, artists, administrators and parents make the crucial difference.

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## Learning Links

Need to learn more for your work in the months ahead? These websites are valuable resources:

**Institute for Education and the Arts**  
<http://www.edartsinstitute.org>

Click on Best Practices for transcripts of round table dialogue on arts education and arts integration.

**Coalition of Essential Schools**  
<http://www.essentialschools.org>  
Click on Curriculum to find interesting articles on integration and essential questions.

**Arts Education Partnership**  
<http://www.aep-arts.org>  
Download the report *Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge* (TETAC) via this site.

**Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE)**  
<http://www.capeweb.org>  
The Chicago Arts Partnership in Education website includes both information about integration and materials to help in planning for arts integration.

**Arts for Academic Achievement**  
<http://education.umn.edu/CAREI/Reports/Annenberg/>  
The Arts for Academic Achievement website provides a tool for integrating the arts with other disciplines.

## Leadership Voices

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Recalling the schools she studied in her work with the national Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge (TETAC), Stuhr says: "Students were more engaged and remembered *everything*. Principals said teachers were invigorated. Everything just seemed more alive."

"Arts integration also diversifies teaching to engage students with a range of backgrounds and learning styles," says Cindi Menefield, visual and performing arts curriculum manager for the Cincinnati Public Schools. For example, Menefield teaches line dancing while students are learning about mathematical patterns. The combination of learning about patterns and moving in patterns, she says, especially benefits tactile-kinesthetic learners.

In fact, the premise behind arts integration is respect for how children learn. "Integration occurs," says Ohio State University professor Michael Parsons, "when students make sense for themselves of their varied learning experiences, when they pull these together to make one view of their world and of their place in it. It takes place in their minds or not at all."

But can arts integration promote general academic success? Evidence is mounting, say Nick Rabkin and Robin Redmond, who edited *Putting the Arts in the Picture*. They cite five projects in urban school systems that are not only improving test scores but also helping students "become better thinkers, develop higher-order skills, and deepen their inclination to learn."

# Newsbreaks

## **Ohio Receives NEA Funding for Professional Development.**

Through a \$50,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ohio Department of Education will work in partnership with the Ohio Arts Council to provide site-based professional development for arts practitioners and school administrators. The focus will be on developing standards-based curriculum and assessments and forming strong partnerships with community leaders and artists.

## **Ohio Chancellor Named to ECS Arts Education Committee.**

Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, 2004-06 chairman of the Education Commission of the States (ECS), has named Ohio Board of Regents Chancellor Roderick Chu to his Commission on the Arts. The Commission will recommend ways to keep the arts strong in our nation's schools.

## **ICARE Linked to Achievement.**

The Center for Arts Education Research, Columbia University, has released its evaluation of ICARE (Initiative for Cultural Arts in Education) in the **Cleveland Municipal Schools**. According to the report: "the more exposure a child had with ICARE, the more likely it is that they had higher test scores" on the fourth grade Ohio Proficiency Tests.

**Columbus Students Restore Mural.** Visual art students at Fort Hayes Metropolitan Education Center, **Columbus City Schools**, helped restore an original 1934 Emerson Burkhardt mural that once hung in Central High. Titled "Music," the mural was white-washed when a principal felt its portrayal of people in evening dress singing, dancing, and playing music was unsuitable. Students integrated study of the mural, conservation techniques, and the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which funded the mural.

## Institute Reflections

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**Artistic engagement is the spark.** The individual student's artistry, her personal desire to make something she cares about, is the fuse that lights arts integrated learning. Ideally, that interest and personal ownership can then be channeled into learning in the art form and the curricular areas. Without that spark, it is just another school assignment that looks a little different. The art spark is the crucial first step.

**We are working in a challenging climate for this exciting but delicate work.** The pressures for immediate measurable demonstrations of learning run counter to the spirit and best practice of this work. However, good arts integration is so powerful that it does boost all kinds of learning, some of which do appear on tests. My advice—don't skew the work to get test results, but do guide arts-vitalized inquiries into areas where the learning will naturally appear on many kinds of assessment.

## The Art of Essential Questions

*Based on an interview with Patricia Stuhr*

*Essential questions are a key feature of an integrated curriculum. Professor Patricia Stuhr, chair of The Ohio State University's Art Education department, answered some questions you may be asking about essential questions.*

**Why are essential questions valuable in an integrated curriculum?** Essential questions help define the concepts that connect the disciplines and maintain a focus on those concepts. They promote inquiry and encourage teachers and students to think in terms of possibilities. They make the curriculum more relevant and important to students' lives.

**What are the major characteristics of powerful essential questions?** Powerful essential questions are formed around important, complex concepts that cut across disciplines and can be viewed from many perspectives.

They help to clarify what students already know, uncover what they should know, and discover what they would like to know.

For example, some essential questions around the complex concept of "violence" might be: 1) *What is violence?* 2) *How is violence reported in the mass media?* 3) *How does violence affect your community?*

**How can a staff get started developing essential questions?** They can start by looking at the state standards and their curriculum guide for an important concept that crosses the disciplines. School leaders should make sure the staff has sufficient planning time to think about the concept and discuss it.

It also helps to invite a teacher who has used essential questions before to share what he or she learned. Many college faculty also would be willing to work with the staff.

## ODE Update *Arts Integration in Ohio's Model Curricula*

Curriculum teams seeking to try arts integration will soon have as examples several lessons in Ohio's model curricula for the fine arts.

In fact, about half of the lessons in Ohio's fine arts, foreign language, and technology model curricula will be interdisciplinary.

ODE will submit the models for State Board of Education approval this summer.

The models for science, social studies, math, and English language arts also include a number of lessons that connect to the arts. Those models are already available on the ODE website.

"Learning in the arts is an experience," says Stan Heffner, ODE's associate superintendent for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. "Students can

easily become passive, but the arts engage them."

Heffner's enthusiasm for arts integration, however, is not solely because of the impact it can have on math or reading: "The arts need to be reflected in our schooling," he said. "They round us out."

Go to <http://ims.ode.state.oh.us/ODE/IMS/Lessons/> to see model lessons and other information.

### New Series: Evaluating Needs

by Michael Sikes, Ph.D., Educational Consultant

*Are you planning to give arts education a greater role in your district's plan for reform? Or are you still undecided? Either way, collecting and analyzing baseline data about your current programs is helpful. This series of articles will help you get the most useful information from your available data.*

Making good decisions about your programs begins with an accurate picture of the current landscape—in other words, *what is the baseline from which all future progress can be measured?* These three guidelines will assist you in collecting baseline data.

**1. Let questions drive your data quest.** Good questions guide inquiry in ways that keep it on target. By asking focused and significant questions, you will get useful data.

Significant questions are linked to key issues of teaching. For example: *Are students meeting essential standards? What do we know about the effectiveness of instructional strategies in our schools? To what extent are parents involved in our district? What factors affect involvement?*

**2. Consider data broadly.** Data are more than numbers on bubble sheets or a computer screen. Your questions should guide you to a variety of data and information. For example, use results from performance-based assessments to complement standardized test data, or conduct interviews to enrich the information gained from survey data.

**3. Collect data strategically.** If done strategically, collecting data need not be time-consuming. Consider using random or stratified sampling to obtain adequate data with efficiency. (Staff in your district that work with EMIS or a research group at a nearby university can help.)

Also, review your initial questions frequently to determine whether they will provide the information you need, and begin analyzing data early.

*Part II in the next Links & Threads will address data analysis.*

### Book Review

Available in May from Teachers College Press is *Framing Education as Art: The Octopus Has a Good Day* by Jessica Hoffmann Davis.

With strong implications for practice, the work celebrates inquiry and multiple perspectives as it explores a range of reflections on art, artistry, artists, art education, and the methods and results of arts-related educational research.

Davis shared lessons in education reform from arts-focused schools at last year's National Endowment for the Arts Summer Institute for School Leaders.

## OAC Update: *Taking the First Steps*

The Ohio Arts Council has funded many programs over the last decade that focused on arts integration and interdisciplinary learning. We believe that arts integration fosters engagement—the starting point for building literacy, increasing achievement, and developing positive student-teacher relationships. We believe arts integration helps cultivate creative minds—so foundational to the state’s cultural, educational, and economic success.

We encourage you to explore and support arts integration.

**Foster communication across disciplines.** For example, fine arts educators in Hamilton City Schools attend grade-level meetings to see what units are planned in other areas. Fine arts and math educators in Cincinnati City Schools have a common vocabulary list to ensure consistent and repeated use of important terms.

**Take advantage of arts educators’ abilities.** In Lima City Schools, where the arts are part of the fabric of the district, arts educators bring creativity to district planning. Mike Huffman says they also bring the logistical expertise exhibited in the product- and performance-oriented environment of arts teaching.

**Begin on a small scale.** Encourage teachers to use the arts to create a richer, more inviting context for the facts and ideas in lessons from other academic areas.

**Seek OAC funding for your arts integration project.** Both OAC grant programs in the Arts Learning area—Arts Partnership and Artist in Residence—support in-depth learning experiences not only *in* the arts, but also *through* and *with* the arts. Visit the OAC website ([www.oac.state.oh.us](http://www.oac.state.oh.us)) for more information, and watch for details about fall grant workshops.

## Institute Participants

- Botkins Local School District
- Cincinnati City School District
- Clark County Educational Service Center
- Cleveland Municipal School District
- Columbus City School District
- Dayton City School District
- Hamilton City School District
- Lakota Local School District
- Lima City School District
- Mississinawa Valley Local School District
- Stark County Educational Service Center
- Steubenville City School District
- Toledo City School District
- Yellow Springs Exempted Village School District

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## ODE Mission

The Ohio Department of Education supports high achievement for all students every year by setting clear and high expectations for all students; by making sure that educators have the skills, knowledge and resources to help students improve; by fostering the ability of families and communities to help students succeed; and by measuring, publicizing and rewarding achievement results.



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## OAC Mission

The Ohio Arts Council is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally, and economically.

### Ohio Arts Council

A STATE AGENCY THAT SUPPORTS  
PUBLIC PROGRAMS  
IN THE ARTS 

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