



Links & Threads

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

Links and Threads is an electronic newsletter for district and school leaders, educators and their arts partners. Its purpose is to assist in making arts learning a more integral part of the core curriculum and achieving the greatest advantage possible from the arts for students. The publication builds upon knowledge gained through the 2004 NEA Summer Institute for School Leaders, promotes dialogue about the role of arts learning in school improvement, shares success stories and provides news about arts-related developments and opportunities.

Partnership, Power, Promise

Arts Learning in Youngstown Changes Lives and Energizes Community

Revitalizing waves of creativity have been flowing through downtown Youngstown, Ohio. Industrial age structures have become artists' spaces, and the recently opened DeYor Performing Arts Center keeps the night vibrant with concerts by the Youngstown Symphony and other cultural events.

Afternoons have a different creative energy though—energy that comes from an innovative K-12 arts education program called SMARTS—Students Motivated by the Arts.

A partnership between Youngstown State University's College of Fine and Performing Arts and Beeghly College of Education, SMARTS helps the community's most underprivileged students experience the joy

and discipline of arts learning and exemplifies what strong nonprofit arts education programs in urban centers can mean to students, teachers and communities.

A Web of Arts Learning Partners

The SMARTS Center, an 8,000 square foot space situated within the walls of the DeYor, offers all the facilities needed for powerful arts learning, including a visual arts classroom, private practice rooms, music ensemble rooms and a theater/dance workshop area. Students in kindergarten through high school come there after school, on Saturday mornings and during the summer for dance, visual arts, music and theater classes, [\(continued next page\)](#)



Students Motivated by the Arts (SMARTS) provides after school arts instruction. Students' theater productions add to the excitement of Youngstown's cultural revitalization.

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Students and teachers come from all over the community for the SMARTS holiday open house. Arts activities and the world's largest bowl of candy are among the surprises that await them.

as well as private and small group music lessons. Participation is free for K-12 students from throughout the region with the Center's primary focus and funding serving those who reside in the city of Youngstown. Many of the students' parents say those arts learning opportunities would not otherwise be possible for their children.

A collaborative web of arts learning partners is what gives SMARTS programs their outstanding quality—quality that earned SMARTS the Ohio Art Education Association's designation of Distinguished Organization for Art Education and made it a 2006 semifinalist for a Coming Up Taller award from the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

SMARTS Director Rebecca Keck says SMARTS is flourishing because of the university's unwavering support, the creativity and expertise added by volunteers and teachers from the local arts community and the dedication of her small staff, whose members all hold part-time positions but give full-time commitment and results. The breadth and quality of the programs offered by SMARTS is possible, she says, because of "amazing pre-service teachers" from Youngstown State University.

SMARTS is an arts learning laboratory for YSU education majors. That partnership means that

future teachers work with real students in a dynamic arts education setting and benefit from the supervision of both teacher educators and fine arts faculty, as well as from collaboration with visiting artists.

A Community-Wide Cause

The vision of SMARTS has captured the hearts and imaginations of numerous community partners. Prominent local artists give generously of their time and talents. A grant from the [Raymond John Wean Foundation](#), which supports community investment and education in Mahoning and Trumbull Counties, has enabled the organization to hire a music educator, add more student teachers and expand the music curriculum. A partnership with the Mahoning County Salvation Army and use of its instruments has paved the way for almost 30 additional students in the past two years to take lessons and play in a new brass ensemble. Numerous area businesses donate services, supplies, equipment and food for events. U.S. Congressman Tim Ryan, who represents Youngstown and the surrounding Mahoning Valley, helps share the SMARTS story. Citizens faithfully attend the SMARTS annual fundraiser *Mad About the Arts*, held in conjunction with the [McDonough Museum of Art](#).

But while SMARTS benefits from the community's generosity and involvement, this arts education partnership also is making a valuable contribution to the community's civic life and perhaps even its future.

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A Valuable Downtown Resource

The SMARTS Center enhances Youngstown's Federal Plaza Corridor, the heart of the city and the locus of many community development projects. The Center's beautiful public gallery and its shop, which sells handmade jewelry and other works of art, add to the cultural vitality of daily city life. Keck believes the laughter and activity of SMARTS students also enliven the cityscape.

"The place has power," she says. "Children and families come downtown from all over the city with a newfound sense of ownership about where they live."

Not far from the SMARTS Center is another symbol of community renewal—the [Youngstown Business Incubator](#). That organization houses several innovative start-up technology companies that promise a new chapter in the Mahoning Valley's economic history. The YBI's chief development officer, Julie Michael Smith, says she views the SMARTS program as an integral part of Youngstown's future. "The arts are part of the larger dynamic ecosystem where innovative thought and entrepreneurship can thrive," she says. "I believe that exposing students to the arts helps them think creatively, gain a broader perspective of the world around them and develop other qualities that drive innovation."

CEO Mike Broderick, whose company [Turning Technologies, LLC](#) began at the YBI, agrees. He welcomes the possibility that SMARTS students may some day apply for jobs with his company, which develops and markets audience response, presentation and learning tools used by many educators in assessment and data-driven decision-making. "Of course, marketing and product development benefit from people who are skilled in the arts," he says. "But I think people with a background in the arts also do well in sales and technical jobs. They think about how to accomplish their goals."



SMARTS students receive free music lessons.

A Community-Wide Asset

While SMARTS is part of a revitalized downtown Youngstown, its power extends far beyond the city center.

SMARTS provides arts classes for after-school programs at schools in nearby Girard and Mineral Ridge, and the SMARTS staff collaborates with area teachers on enriching their arts programs and integrating learning in the arts and other subject areas. "I tell teachers to use SMARTS for the things they dream about," says Keck.

SMARTS also holds drum circles, performances and classes at community events around the Mahoning Valley. A local children's hospital, a juvenile detention center and other community organizations that serve children and youth with special challenges also benefit from the SMARTS program's outreach.

But it is the students participating in SMARTS who will carry its benefits most powerfully into the community's future. "Literacy is at the core of our mission, and the arts also teach discipline, focus, self-awareness, teamwork and determination," says Keck. "Those are our most important community impacts—what students take back to school with them."

Wings to Fly

PNC Grant to Cleveland Arts Partners Brings Learning, Culture and Fun to Children

A three-year grant of \$2 million from the PNC Foundation will enable organizations in Cleveland to provide arts education programs and professional development to pre-K students and teachers in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and Head Start centers throughout Cuyahoga County. About 2000 children per year will experience Cleveland's cultural richness and benefit from arts-enriched instruction designed to help prepare them academically, socially and emotionally for kindergarten.

The PNC Foundation receives its principal funding from the PNC Financial Services Group, the Pittsburgh-based financial institution that recently purchased National City Bank in Cleveland. To date PNC has committed over \$17 million in grants to projects in early childhood education. The grants are a part of *Grow Up Great*, PNC's 10-year, \$100 million investment in school readiness. According to Eva Blum, chair of the PNC Foundation and director of Community Affairs for PNC, early childhood education became the focus of her organization's giving because that area promised the greatest impact. "If you look at the studies, a disadvantaged five-year-old starts kindergarten with the vocabulary of an average three and a half year old," she says. "The gap gets larger by the time the child gets to third grade and can't read at grade level."

The partnership in Cleveland is called *Our Kids and the Arts—A Great Early Start*. The four partners—the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Cleveland Orchestra, PlayhouseSquare and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame—plan a range of educational activities for the Head Start and Pre-K classes, professional development for teachers and outreach to families.

"We hope the children will form lasting connections with the arts institutions and develop a love of the arts that will stay with them for the rest of their lives," says Blum.



Music therapist Deforia Lane leads the Toddler Rock program at Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame—one of the preschool arts programs benefiting from the PNC Foundation's Grow Up Great grants.

Building a Rock Solid Foundation

Deforia Lane, Ph.D, delights in watching those connections develop as she works with preschoolers in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's Toddler Rock program, now one component of *Our Kids and the Arts*. "Many of the kids have never had the Rock Hall experience," she says. "After a few weeks, they walk in there and go to their favorite exhibits. Or a child will point to an outfit in one of the displays and say, 'That's mine!' I love to see them claiming it, making it their own."

Toddler Rock consists of 30 weekly visits to the Rock Hall. Each hour-long session is spent in music and movement activities that help children develop musical knowledge and skills while also building important pre-literacy skills, such as letter recognition, alliteration and rhyme. Lane says the stimulating conversations she envisions happening at home as parents recognize the songs their children are learning also can enhance literacy.

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Lane is Director of Music Therapy with Cleveland's University Hospitals Case Medical Center. She developed Toddler Rock in 1999 with Ed Gallagher, Director of Education and Creative Arts Therapies at the Beck Center for the Arts. The program has grown to a staff of eleven board-certified music therapists serving nearly 200 preschoolers and their teachers each week. (For more about the academic, social and emotional benefits of the program, see Lane and Gallagher's article in the May/June 2008 issue of [TRIAD](#).)

Making the Most of Partnership

A new member of the *Grow Up Great* Advisory Council, Lane says the [Cleveland Museum of Art](#), [PlayhouseSquare](#) and the [Cleveland Orchestra](#) also have rich arts programs planned. Teaching artists will visit classrooms. Children and families will attend special musical and theater performances. With help from visual artists, the children will make art and explore the museum collection. "I have seen how children can express themselves through music," she says. "I can't wait to see what happens when art and drama are added. I think it will be world-changing for the children, and I don't doubt it will have a similar impact on us too."

The four arts institutions also will work with early childhood teachers on adding the arts to their classroom curriculum and activities. The partners plan four joint professional days, each hosted by one of the institutions. Lane says the diversity of the partners strengthens the program: "Each of us will deliver what we do best, but it will be a complete package that addresses the whole child and gives each more ways to be successful."

Blum is excited to be working with Cleveland's arts community. "When we met with the potential partners, they were very enthusiastic," she says. "Each had a program already in place. They listened to our ideas and shared their ideas."

Lane says PNC has an excellent approach to working with partners. "They gave us the wings to fly," she says. "They started with what we had in place and gave us the support to take it to the next level. That's a bit of a dream."



Music therapist Ed Gallagher leads a Toddler Rock music activity at the Rock Hall.

Newsbreaks

See Ohio Governor's Youth Art Exhibit Winners

Images of work by this year's student artists who earned the Governor's Award for Excellence are now online at the [Ohio Governor's Youth Art Exhibition](#) Web site.

Two Northeast Ohio Schools Receive Awards

Cleveland School of the Arts was one of six schools to receive a Panasonic Corporation of North America School Change Award. The first Ohio school to win, CSA will receive cash and equipment and will become part of a major national research project. Hathaway Brown School in Shaker Heights received the Educational Theatre Association's Outstanding School Award, which is conferred each year on up to twelve schools whose work exemplifies and promotes high standards of quality in educational theatre.

AEP Plans Forum on Arts and 21st Century Learning

The Arts Education Partnership plans its next forum for October 2-3, 2009, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The event will be a lively exploration of the connections and synchronicities between the arts and 21st century learning. In particular, the gathering will focus on ways the imagination, creativity and innovation and other principles of 21st century learning are incorporated, articulated and supported throughout the education system from pre-K to higher education. The meeting will be hosted by Lesley University. [Information is online.](#)

Playing to Strengths: *Tech Prep Program Unites Artistry and Ingenuity*

Ohio students who aspire to careers in theater and those who participate in the state's Tech Prep programs may seem to be on very different roads. But at [Centerville High School](#), those two roads converge in a technical theater program that promises an exciting range of career possibilities.

Technical theater is a Tech Prep program that combines a college prep curriculum with development of both creative and technical skills in all facets of theater production—sets and props, costumes, lighting and sound, as well as stage direction and production management. While some students who enter the program view it as a stepping stone to careers in acting or directing, many are looking for work that combines creative opportunities and interesting technical challenges.

Mike Cordonnier, whose engineering background and theater experience make him an excellent teacher and role model for students in the program, says the classes taught by him and colleague Joe Beumer represent a range of talents and interests—exactly what is needed to create the magic of theater.

“Some students are more interested in the creative side of the profession like set design. Others will be the builders and workers,” he says. “Students can play to their strengths.”

An Outstanding Training Ground

In addition to rigorous academic work, Centerville's technical theater students work on major projects each quarter of the school year. They also participate in a Tech Prep showcase sponsored by the [Miami Valley Tech Prep Consortium](#). Cordonnier says students who participate in the showcase choose individual projects that interest them. One student, for example, built a working windmill prop while another chose to create a portfolio that exhibited aspects of the work involved in managing a production.

The high school's new performing arts center enables students to gain extensive practical experience in their field. It includes a 1200-seat auditorium with a large stage and state-of-the-art lighting and sound systems, as well as practice rooms, a green room, a scene shop area and a dance studio. The facility hosted 160 events last year, including performances by schools, community groups and professionals. Students in the technical theater program had the opportunity to run those events,

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Technical theater students at Centerville High School gain experience in all aspects of creating a theater production, as well as rigorous academic preparation for college.



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gaining valuable experience practicing their craft and sometimes receiving payment for their work. They also helped with productions at Sinclair Community College and the University of Dayton. Cordonnier says such live events are the best training ground for students. “They learn to be fluid and flexible, to think on their feet and improvise,” he says. “They get to work with people other than their teachers, including some professionals who have very high expectations.” Cordonnier says outside groups are very impressed with his students’ professionalism and the quality of their work.

Exciting Career Possibilities

Students in Centerville’s technical theater program are on a fast track to an associate of arts degree in theatre technology from Sinclair Community College, which offers a \$3000 scholarship to qualifying Tech Prep students. Jon Wesley, Centerville’s Career Tech principal, says completers of the program also will be well positioned to enter other two-year and four-year postsecondary programs if their career aspirations change.

According to Cordonnier, jobs in theaters and other entertainment facilities are not the only opportunities for his students. “There are jobs for them in the cruise ship, casino and amusement park industries. They also can work for companies that create trade show exhibits or the environments used in themed retail,” he says.

Growing Opportunity and Interest

Since Centerville’s technical theater program is new, student success stories are still to come. But prospects for such programs are good, says Steve Black, who directs the 35-year-old theatre technology program at Fort Hayes Arts & Academic High School in Columbus. He says completers of his program have successful careers in set design, stage management and other technical areas, and he sees growing interest in those and other segments of the entertainment industry.

A new Theater Arts Career Academy launched this year by the [Six District Educational Compact](#) in Northeast Ohio demonstrates that interest. It also illustrates the diverse range of possible content for theater arts programs. The Theater Arts Career Academy will provide a direct pathway to a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Akron’s College of Creative and Professional Arts. It includes concentrations in acting/directing, design/technology, arts administration and the history, literature and criticism of drama.

It is likely that such Tech Prep programs in the arts will be more common in years to come. Nick Wilson, interim director of the Miami Valley Tech Prep Consortium, says that over the past few years, interest has been growing in the Arts and Communication pathway, which includes technical theater and also prepares students for careers in other areas of the performing arts, media arts and visual communications.

The Art of Improvement *“Got Partners?”*

Partnerships among teams and organizations whose backgrounds, expertise and missions differ can be a way to maximize resources, share costs and expand influence. Powerful insights and breakthrough ideas often emerge when organizations work together. But how do you find and evaluate potential partners? Begin by asking yourself:

- What are the goals of other teams and organizations in our school and community? How do their goals intersect with ours?
- How can our team’s activities benefit other groups?
- In what areas could our team benefit from different thinking styles, expertise or perspectives?

Volume 2 of The Ohio Arts Council’s series [Focusing the Light: The Art and Practice of Planning](#) includes information on building successful partnerships and project teams.

Learning Links

Click on each link below for information and ideas about partnerships.

[The Community Toolbox \(University of Kansas\)](#)

[The Art of Collaboration \(Arts Education Partnership\)](#)

[Promising Practices \(National Network of Partnership Schools\)](#)

For additional resources related to partnerships, go to the OAC’s [Cultural Planning Resources Database](#) and select Volume 2.

Making the Case

OAC Executive Director and Toledo Business Leader Outline Benefits of the Arts for Legislators

Julie Henahan, executive director of the Ohio Arts Council, testified in March before the Ohio House Finance and Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education in support of the OAC's proposed budget for FY2010 and 2011. Her remarks outlined how the arts enrich individual and community life, expand economic opportunities, contribute to the "innovation environment" and aid the development of imagination and creativity in children. In describing the vision of the OAC, she said, "We have one end in sight—a state that is educationally, culturally and economically healthy and a good place to live for citizens from all walks of life and in all corners of the state."

The interdependencies suggested by that vision were supported by the remarks of Thomas Brady, Ph.D., CEO and founder of Plastic Technologies, Inc. He also is a member of the Governor's Third Frontier Advisory Board and a member of Ohio Citizens for the Arts. Testifying alongside Henahan, Brady told legislators that Ohio's investment in OAC programs produces "civic benefits that are widespread and significant—job retention and creation, economic development, improved educational outcomes for young people, stabilized downtowns, preservation of the state's arts infrastructure and support for disadvantaged and underserved populations."

Brady presented results from *Ohio's Arts: A Foundation of Innovation, Creativity and Economic Strength*, a study conducted by the Center for Regional Development (CRD) at Bowling Green State University. According to the study, the creative industries—museums and collections, the performing arts, the visual arts and photography, film, radio and television, design, publishing, schools and services—contribute more than \$25 billion to Ohio's economy, support 231,200 jobs and generate \$1.06 billion in tax revenues every year.

Limited time prevented Brady and Henahan from expressing the economic, civic and educational impact of the arts fully, but the [OAC Web site](#) continues the dialogue in a section called *Making the Case*. It includes the OAC's budget talking points, links to the CRD report cited above and a series called "The Arts: Part of the Solution," which features one-page success stories from communities around the state. To find the information, go to the menu bar and select "About OAC," then "Making the Case."

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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.



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