

Investing in the Future: Arts Learning in Oregon

CONNECTIONS | ARTS LEARNING | JUNE 2010



Cartier uses a frame to talk about perspective and photo composition at Camp Caldera near Sisters. "Without a program like Caldera, the goals I have set for myself would not be getting accomplished." Photo: Sam Slater

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CONNECTIONS

A series of monographs highlighting best practices and the arts at work in Oregon.

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Ian Summerfield and Matt Holmes hand-color silk screened labels for their band's CDs at the Pendleton Center for the Arts' "Make Your Own Merch" class. Photo: Pendleton Center for the Arts



Columbia Gorge Arts in Education in Hood River serves students on both sides of the Columbia River. Students from Henkle Middle School in White Salmon, Washington work on bookmaking techniques during a field trip to the Maryhill Museum. Photo: Leith Gaines



The Americana Song Academy, held each fall, allows students to focus on their songwriting. Photo: Brad Tisdal

Creative Oregon Boosts Arts Learning

The Arts Commission's Creative Oregon initiative, funded by Governor Kulongoski's CHAMP efforts, continues to strengthen arts learning across the state.

With the leadership of Arts Education Coordinator Deb Vaughn, the Commission convened the 2nd Annual Arts Education Congress in November 2009, with participation increased by 50% from the first convening, testament to the growing understanding that the arts are essential to a complete education. The congress included sessions by a variety of presenters including Senator Suzanne Bonamici and Rep. Jefferson Smith, and, by the end of the day, there was consensus on the direction of the Commission's arts learning work. Building on the focus that stemmed from the first congress: *Sustainable improvement to Oregon's K-12 systems so that the arts play a key role in the education of every child*, participants narrowed the direction to *Improving the capacity of classroom teachers to teach and use the arts to improve learning*.

The Commission funneled that energy into the development of a proposal to the Education Leaders Institute, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. Working around the key question, *How can Oregon support and strengthen the arts-based preparation of generalist classroom teachers?* a six member team was developed and proposal framed by early 2010. By May 2010, Oregon learned its team will join five other states in Chicago in July 2010. The overall mission: develop and design coordinated public education strategies with arts at the core.

The Commission is not alone in thinking that creativity and the arts play a key role in the education of every child. In late May, producers of Oregon Public Radio's award-winning Oregon Art Beat aired a half-hour special, "Teaching Creativity: Is Arts Education the Answer?" The piece received national attention and sparked conversation statewide.

Later that week, OPB's "Think Out Loud" show aired a live radio conversation on the same topic, generating an unprecedented number of calls and blog posts on the critical importance of arts education.

The stories in this monograph highlight exceptional work but there is still opportunity to improve arts learning for all Oregon students.

Now, more than ever, our student's creative capacity and originality are skills increasingly valued by employers in the global economy. But arts education is not all about brain research, test scores or 21st century skills. It's also about the joy and thrill of playing music, acting and creating art.

Join the conversation. Log on to www.oregonartscommission.org/oaec, the online forum that lets you connect with the ELI team, hear from Oregonians about activity in local schools and learn about innovative programs.

Christine D'Arcy
Executive Director



Sparkplug dance workshops help build critical brain-body connections as parents, toddlers and even infants explore creative movement together. Photo: Joy Taubner



Cartoonist and writer John Isaacson discusses sequencing in graphic novels with students at Lincoln High School in Portland. Photo: Seth Thompson



... arts education is not all about brain research, test scores or 21st century skills. It's also about the joy and thrill of playing music, acting and creating art.

Caldera: We Are Family

CALDERA CHANGES LIVES THROUGH THE ARTS USING A SUPPORT NETWORK FOR VULNERABLE KIDS

PARIS, A HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR walks through the large atrium of the offices of famed advertising agency Wieden + Kennedy, past the maze of glassed-in cubicles to Caldera’s conference room that’s filled with idea boards and photo montages of kids and their art.

“So sorry that I didn’t make it to your rugby match,” says Caldera’s education director Kirsten Kilchenstein to Paris whose engaging face graces Caldera publications around the room. “I meant to go and I got immersed in yard work. How’d it go?”

“I played for 90 minutes and four games,” answers Paris with a proud smile.

“But you didn’t get hurt this time? No concussion?” Kilchenstein asks in a tone that sounds more like a Mother Hen than an Arts Administrator.

Not that this day-to-day knowledge of Caldera kids is unusual. In fact, their constant support for each child defines the organization. “We’ve been going through a re-branding,” says Kilchenstein of Caldera’s ever-morphing identity. “The notion of family kept coming up. While the arts might be the vehicle, it’s definitely not the ‘it’. I hear a lot of kids say they come back for the people—they love the arts, but they come back because it’s a constant caring community of people.”

Caldera began 14 years ago as a summer arts program for underserved Portland students. Founded by Dan Wieden + Kennedy under the belief that nurturing creativity in children—especially at-risk children dealing with real-life challenges such as foster care and drug abuse—could change the children’s lives

for the better. It soon became apparent that a few weeks at the Caldera camp outside Sisters during the summer was not enough to trigger the kind of change the group believed possible.

“I felt like the camp was not enough, and to some degree could be harmful,” says Kilchenstein who joined Caldera in 2001. “Here we’ve taken them away from their homes to this place that for them might seem magical and to show them all of these wonderful opportunities. Then the camp is over and we send them home where there’s no chance to stay connected to the opportunities.”

Caldera determined that a more effective model would provide sustained year-round support for the students and even extended that support into early adulthood. Children selected for Caldera’s program (currently in five Metro-area schools and five schools in Central Oregon) begin in the sixth grade. Throughout middle school, Caldera provides weekly arts mentoring, weekend arts activities and once a year, Portland and Central Oregon students gather on the Caldera land for eight days of summer camp. In high school, the students immerse themselves in their chosen art form and learn practical professional skills from a mentor in their field of study. They also have opportunities to show their work in art shows, film festivals, and publications. By the time college is on the horizon, Caldera assists with college applications, organizes college tours, hosts a college fair, and provides scholarships.



Caldera’s “Create, Don’t Hate!” project featured student-designed posters which were later displayed on billboards around Portland. Paris’ poster design used text and a self-portrait to communicate the message of tolerance. Photo: Paris



Paris, one of the students mentored by Caldera, displays her photographs and her confidence during a summer retreat at Camp Caldera on Blue Lake in Central Oregon. She has since been accepted at the University of Oregon and awarded a full scholarship. Photo: Julie Keefe

Another Caldera student, 17-year old Eloë, started with the program as a troubled sixth-grader. “Bad grades, bad behavior, I didn’t care about school,” says Eloë who hides his curly red hair beneath a black baseball cap. “I didn’t do any schoolwork for a year.” After transferring to Open Meadow, an alternative school in North Portland and entering the Caldera program there, his apathy turned to enthusiasm for his newfound creative outlets. “Caldera taught me how to learn about things I was really interested in,” he says. “They showed me that I was capable of learning. I just didn’t know how to apply this to school.”

Now a mentor for younger students and teaching video production while attending college, Eloë’s story of growing up in poverty resonates with his students. “Kids just haven’t seen adults in their lives go very far,” he says. “It’s telling that they can one day do something

as big as they want and showing them a link between them and success.”

“When I watch the older students mentor the younger students, that’s when I know it works,” says Kilchenstein who clearly admires Eloë, calling him “one in a million,” though his success within Caldera is hardly the exception. “I can give you the stats and the data, but that is the real indication that it works.”

Of course there are students who do not find a good fit in Caldera, but for the ones who remain, they thrive within the program and its support system. “We’re trying to get kids through adolescence and into adulthood feeling like they know what their options are, are more creative thinkers and can make informed decisions,” says Kilchenstein, sounding very much like a proud parent. “We try to crack their minds open so they can see what’s out there.”



Bad grades, bad behavior, I didn’t care about school. ...

Caldera taught me how to learn about things I was really interested in. They showed me that I was capable of learning. I just didn’t know how to apply this to school.”

– Eloë, 17-year-old student at Caldera

Sparkplug Dance: Your Baby's Brain on Dance

CRITICAL NEURAL CONNECTIONS DEVELOP AS PARENTS EXPLORE CREATIVE MOVEMENT WITH KIDS

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE the power of the baby brain. That's the message that Rachael Carnes spreads through her work as director of Sparkplug Dance in Eugene. "In the past few years, there's been an explosion of awareness of the critical window of opportunity of brain development in the 0-3 years," says Carnes. In response, parents, caregivers, and teachers turn to dance and movement classes. "People are always looking for something that is hands-on, participatory and gets people moving."

Utilizing the most up-to-date research on brain development, Carnes designs programs that encourage multi-sensory learning through movement for babies

and toddlers. But perhaps more importantly, she teaches parents how to be teachers during this crucial developmental phase. "Play takes you into a really important part of the learning process," says Carnes who encourages parents to put away their gadgets and get on the floor and play with their kids. "It's not something that can be done with a computer or video game."

Bringing this information to at-risk parents and their children through classes in the community and throughout the state is a large portion of Sparkplug's outreach. Since 2004, Carnes has lead classes at Eugene's Willamette High School Teen Parent program, providing teen moms with information on movement as a developmental tool. As program coordinator Crystal Myers says, "Young parents are rarely taught how they need to play with their children. It is even less common for them to be taught why they need to interact."

"I'm humbled by how much these moms are doing," says Carnes of her students struggling to complete high school with the added challenge of parenthood. "They are so focused on learning the best ways to help their babies and they are hungry to do it right."

Interaction comes in the form of dance and movement but there is a good deal of theory behind every imaginary bird swoop and snake slither. Carnes's five-point approach remains the same for every age group she works with. "First we warm up to an idea, then we explore it, we build skills, we create with it, then we reflect on it," she says. "Take any piece of that away, and it's just not as satisfying." By focusing less on skill building and more on the science behind the movement, she's able to engage her students in a unique way.

In a class full of teen mothers, Carnes observed that her students readily adopted information on how and why their newborns moved and interacted with the world. As they sat in a circle, babies gathered in the center, one young mother worried about the way her baby curled and unfurled on the floor. Another mother reassured her using Carnes's own terminology, "He's just exploring his head-tail connection. You want them to do that."

Caretakers also benefit from Carnes' teaching, and in the case of the Willamette High School program where a staff of childcare professionals care for babies while the mothers attend classes, Carnes' gospel of movement sank in. Five years ago, after completing Carnes' training about the importance of movement on their tiny charges' brain development, staff whisked all bouncy seats and high chairs from the nursery. Now they allows the babies to move and explore on floor mats and to stare at themselves in the mirrors.

"I know it sounds hokey, but there's something really wonderful about moving and dancing together," says Carnes. While it may seem simple, those babies are growing complex brains, and so are their parents.

Young students develop coordination and motor skills by exploring physical movement in Sparkplug Dance's classes. Photo: Joy Taubner



Writers in the Schools: Words and Images

COMICS IN SCHOOLS REACH OUT TO A GENERATION OF VISUAL LEARNERS

IT MIGHT SEEM a stretch to imagine how comic books can teach writing, but for artist and writer John Isaacson, it's natural. "Comics are really driven by the story," he explains. "The same sort of motivation that drives someone to write a poem or story is the same for comics."

In his two years teaching comic and graphic novel writing as a part of Writers in the Schools (WITS), Isaacson understands the power of images in the lives of teenagers now. "Kids today are really visually wired, with video games, films and comics, kids have an advanced visual literacy," he says. "With very little instruction on how to draw, students will already be drawing over the shoulder shots or bird's eye views. They've absorbed lots of techniques from film and television and they know if they want to show someone looking at a plate of food, they'll draw the view from above."

Writers in the Schools (or WITS) started in 1996 as a program of Literary Arts with the intent to bring published writers into the Portland Public Schools. Over the years, WITS has blossomed into a semester-long writing residency in every Portland public high school and even a handful of charter schools.

Not content to drop a writer into a class and hope for the best, WITS teams classroom teachers with writers to establish goals for the particular class. Classroom teachers, who are the ones who initiate the WITS program for their class, also attend an orientation session and receive professional development on teaching writing. "Teachers are our partners," says WITS Program Director, Mary Rechner.

The close relationship with teachers extends to individual high schools and Portland Public Schools administration as well. WITS began as a free program for schools, but soon asked for a financial contribution from the schools as a commitment to the importance of the partnership between WITS and the school. "PPS contributes between 10-15% of the real cost of the residency program as a whole. The rest of the cost is paid by Literary Arts," reports Rechner. "We have a long term relationship with schools that we don't take for granted and the schools feel that WITS is a really good value."

That value comes from the program's ability to match writers working in diverse genres to varied student populations including non-native speakers and students with disabilities. Rechner notes that adding graphic novelists and comic book artists to the WITS



Artist and writer John Isaacson drew a comic to tell the story of his experiences in the classroom teaching students about visual storytelling.

roster was in response to requests from teachers themselves. "Teachers were interested in getting graphic novelists and artists in their classrooms because they were familiar with the literary language of poetry and drama but the choices of language of graphic novelists are less familiar to them," she says.

Isaacson sees a natural synergy between comics and other school subjects. This term, he's teaching comics for a Global Studies class at Portland's Lincoln High School where students are studying countries of the Middle East. "Luckily there are a lot of comics out there about those countries that are non-fiction accounts of what it's like there," he says of the graphic novels such as *Persepolis* (about a girl growing up in Iran) that he uses as jumping off points for his own lessons. "The teachers are pretty satisfied that the comics supplement their curriculum."

Utilizing comics in the classroom also recognizes that kids need an arsenal of tools to express themselves through writing. "Comics are giving students an additional way to access writing and literacy," explains Isaacson. "The drawings are a hook. They get people's attention and get students more interested in writing."

Which shows that it doesn't take a superhero to inspire students to write.

Portland Youth Philharmonic: Working in Harmony

EMPOWERING PARENTS AS ADVOCATES OF SCHOOL MUSIC AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

GREAT YOUTH ORCHESTRAS are not born, they are created. In the case of the nationally recognized Portland Youth Philharmonic, students arrive through a framework of music education that begins with parents and extends to music in school classrooms. “Because our students practice with us only once a week,” says PYP’s former Executive Director, Diane Syrcle, “we rely on school music programs to create a readiness for musicians who are eager to perform.”

Making the connection between strong school music programs and a world-class youth orchestra is one PYP has fostered for its entire 86-year history. “We tell our musicians,” says Syrcle, “We encourage you to participate in your school music program and not to expect that once you’ve arrived at PYP your learning is done. The best learning is daily in your schools.”

Relying on the consistency and maintenance of school orchestras in the 70 different members’ schools requires advocacy by PYP and parents so that the budget axes don’t land on the music programs. “Four years ago,” says Syrcle, who was at the orchestra for seven years, “I decided that it’s important for parents to understand that they are voters who pay taxes and actually the school districts work for them. It’s important that parents see that on an organizational level, we appreciate the role that classroom music teachers

play in getting students ready to be in PYP.” Thus when budget talks begin, parents are urged to campaign for continuing music funding with the assistance and support of PYP. Last year, when budgets across the Metro area looked dire, PYP organized parents and ticketholders to start a letter writing campaign, so teachers and administrators understood their commitment to the schools’ music programs.

“Cutting band programs is shortsighted,” says parent Sue Black, whose 17-year-old daughter Anna has played bassoon in PYP for five years. “If we don’t support school music, PYP will die.” Her daughter recently won first place in a state bassoon solo competition, an instrument she first picked up after seeing a visiting bassoon player perform at her middle school in Tigard. “That same school’s music program was nearly cut last year,” says Black. “What would have happened if Anna had never seen that performance?”

Drawing students from across the region and from across the socio-economic spectrum, PYP relies on school music teachers to introduce classical music to students and help guide promising players toward the orchestra. As sign of respect for these classroom teachers, PYP also shares their performance schedule with them a year in advance so that conflicting concert schedules are kept to a minimum.



*PYP cellist
Louie Leager
demonstrates
his leadership
skills by offering
direction to fellow
players before a
concert.*



Bassoonist Meaghan Russell's concentration—a skill that she can carry into her academic and professional life—is unbreakable as she awaits a cue from PYP conductor David Hattner. Photos: Pete Stone

Once a member of PYP (the youngest enter PYP at the tender age of seven), students are held to a standard of excellence that mirrors that of professional conservatory training. This means a strict absence policy and practice, practice, practice. “The goal is to help them understand that hard work and discipline pay great dividends,” says Syrcle who also reports that PYP is proud of their 100% graduation rate. And when PYP graduates go on to study at Juilliard or to college

to study other subjects, they take with them the life skills and music training they learned at PYP.

“Alumni come back and tell me, ‘At PYP, I learned about discipline, follow-through and how to be on time and prepare,’” says Syrcle. “They didn’t realize the preparation of PYP until they entered into the adult world.”

That’s something everyone—PYP, school band leaders, and parents—can be proud of.



“The young people in PYP are high achieving individuals—they come to PYP because of its reputation for excellence. They challenge each other and raise the bar collectively. We are proud that many of PYP’s students go on top colleges. Whether they continue to play music or pursue another field, alumni say that the skills they gained in PYP help them excel in whatever they do in life. Studying music helps kids learn how to learn.”

— Michael Kosmala, Portland Youth Philharmonic board member

Paulina School: Art on the Go

A COMMUNITY EFFORT DROVE THE ARTS BACK TO ONE CENTRAL OREGON SCHOOL

OVER THE SMALL country roads and through the hills of Central Oregon, a brightly painted van dubbed VanGo arrives at its destination in the tiny town of Paulina, population 123. Artist-in-residence Debra Fisher makes the two-and-a-half-hour drive from Bend to Paulina in the specially outfitted van twice a month to bring visual art to the 30 children attending Paulina's K-8 school. Before the arrival of VanGo and other arts residencies that started this year, Paulina's only school had no art, music, or creative writing for years. Budget cuts had whittled away much of the curriculum to the point where even new science textbooks were unfeasible.

Enter parent Margaret Wood, mother of fourth grader Lachlan, and accidental arts champion. "I really believe that it's important for kids to get the whole picture in order to be well-balanced," she says. Moreover, she knew arts could be incorporated into the overall curriculum; it was just going to take some initiative on her part.

Taking her cue from a successful fundraising auction in the equally tiny Southeastern Oregon town of Frenchglen, Wood and other Paulina parents organized an auction featuring locally made art to raise money for the arts in Paulina schools. "There are so many

creative people here," she says of the auction inventory that included bespoke leather boots and a saddle rack made from barn wood. By the end of the event, they had raised enough to fund a variety of programs for the students for the 2009-2010 school year and beyond.

"Prior to starting, we looked at state standards in art, which we found rather nebulous," recalls teacher Mike Zielaskowski. The decision was made to invite VanGo, a program run by Arts Central in Bend, that Wood found by surfing the Internet.

"Margaret called me out of the blue," recalls Ingrid Lustig, Arts Central's former Education Director, who was impressed by Woods' initiative and committed to bringing VanGo to the site, however remote.

That first visit by VanGo where the students created simple masks proved successful though the reality of an arts-free school was apparent. "The kids were hungry for art," says artist Fisher. "Half of them were not at all confident in their ability and I told them not to worry about being 'good at art'."

Yet this essential lesson was exactly what parent Wood hoped would come out of an arts curriculum. "When the kids are first introduced to art making, it takes them a little time to learn there's no right or wrong way to create," she says. "Doing art helps them



Upper grade students worked on animal masks, using 3-D techniques during Debra Fisher's residency at Paulina School. Photo: Ingrid Lustig



Twenty-seven students from Paulina School pose with VanGo at the conclusion of the residency. 4th through 8th grade students are wearing the masks they created. Photo: Debra Fisher

with their decision-making and builds their confidence. As a parent, that's the most gratifying part."

"The art was a positive experience for the students," reports Zielaskowski, one of two teachers in the school. "Their final products, particularly at the upper grades (4-8) have been phenomenal and the students have been able to apply some of the 3-D concepts to other subject areas. They used a 3-D technique to make models of the Cascade Range volcanoes as this was a focus area for instruction and field trips for this year."

Inspired by their art lessons, the school's lively show and tell sessions now feature students presenting their outside-of-school projects such as sculptures created from firewood.

"These kids are pretty special," says Fisher. "I've taught at schools all over Oregon. These kids are way more mature and attentive and responsible for themselves. I know we are making a difference because I can see it in their faces."



Primary students practiced color mixing and sharing resources during a 2-D painting project at Paulina School. Photo: Ingrid Lustig

Northwest Film Center: Students' Voices in Film

YOUTH FROM ALL BACKGROUNDS LEARN THE POWER OF FILMMAKING

ELLEN THOMAS, education director at the Portland Art Museum's Northwest Film Center, had never heard of krumping or realized its importance in the world of at-risk youth until she arrived at MacLaren Youth Facility last fall at the behest of a group of juvenile offenders at the facility.

"The young men were dressed in suits, sat us at a table and put out a 20-page proposal they'd developed for a documentary they desperately wanted to make about 'krump' dancing," she recalls of her meeting with the students and Film Center teacher and filmmaker Brian Lindstrom. "We were so taken with their maturity and their devotion that we helped them create a demo reel that they could take to the administration to show their seriousness on the project."

Leading the effort was Brian Vargo, who spent four years at MacLaren and who'd always been intrigued with filmmaking. With help and mentorship from the Film Center, Vargo created a short film featuring fellow inmates dancing in the highly theatrical and energetic style of dance dubbed "krumping" to show to the Oregon Youth Authority which runs MacLaren. "The administration was dubious as to the connection between dancing and rehabilitation, but Brian made a very striking case with the project," says Thomas.

After completing the demo reel and gaining release from MacLaren in November, 2009, Vargo enrolled in classes at Portland State University and the Film Center down the street. "The film center is one of the best things that has ever happened to me," he says. "It has opened the door to opportunities that I didn't know were even out there." These days, he's immersed in his film studies and hopes to complete his film project (titled "Krump as an Intervention") with a donation of \$8,000 in services from the Film Center and a \$5,000 grant from the Youth Authority.

"Brian Vargo's amazing, I can't wait to see what he does with his life," says Thomas. "He's incredibly inspiring." His success is also a testament to the power of film and its ability to give a voice to kids who might not have had an opportunity before. "With filmmaking, kids learn that they can be a storyteller," she says. "Especially at-risk kids who have no idea that they have



Motivated young filmmaker Brian Vargo relaxes between takes of his film, "Krump as an Intervention." Photo: Northwest Film Center and Jason E. Kaplan

a story to tell—and that they have a way to tell the story in a powerful way that can affect people."

"It's really been an awesome privilege to have the support of the film center on this project. I used to be a troubled kid myself," says Vargo. "I've learned that when you start taking steps in the right direction people just come out of the woodwork wanting to help you. The Film Center has been an excellent example of this."

Brian Vargo's voice comes out loud and clear.



Stills from Brian Vargo's film, a documentary on krump dancing featuring young men at the state's MacLaren Youth Facility in Woodburn. Photos: Brian Vargo

The Americana Project: a Community Effort

THE SISTERS COMMUNITY CULTIVATES A VIBRANT GENERATION OF YOUNG ARTISTS

“WE SEE OURSELVES as a booster club,” laughs Brad Tisdel, co-founder and director of the Americana Project in Sisters. “There are football boosters and we’re the arts boosters.”

In the ten years since the Americana Project began, it’s safe to say that the organization has transcended the label of booster into more like an arts and community champion. “The goal is to build community through the arts—kids connected to and powered by a strong sense of community,” says Tisdel. “The voice of youth matters, and we not only want to hear it but we’ll nurture and help develop it.”

The Americana Project grew out of the successful Sisters Folk Festival, an annual event featuring American roots music, from blues to bluegrass. Part guitar and singing instruction and part American music and cultural history, The Americana Project brought an integrated curriculum to Sisters Public Schools elementary, middle, and high schools. Project teachers work full-time in the schools; the high school instructor is paid by the district and the middle school instructor by the Americana Project. By having teachers on staff rather than employing them as visiting residency artists, the program has become fully incorporated into the schools.

Younger students start with learning the guitar and singing in groups and by the time they are in the program as high school students, they are writing original songs and have experience performing and recording their own music. Professional experience for students abounds with opportunities for teaching guitar to younger students, assisting backstage at the Folk Festival, and performing at large events such as the Project’s annual fundraiser, My Own Two Hands, that features Americana students performing their own music on stages around Sisters. High School students also utilize the full recording and engineering studio at Sisters High School to record their own and each other’s original songs—a valuable skill in the music business.

While the emphasis of the Americana Project remains learning to write and perform their own songs, the hope of the program is not to create professional musicians, instead through music, the students gain perspective on who they are and where they’ve come from. “Self-expression and respect for what’s come before you is an excellent way of fostering a sense of self and place,” says Tisdale who sees Sisters as the perfect incubator for its students’ dreams for their futures. “In our community, pursuing a career in the arts is absolutely encouraged but we try to be realistic as well—that maybe it’s not as romantic a lifestyle or



*Oregon poet Kit Stafford (center) serves as a local resource for Americana Project students Drew Harrison and Paige Brugier as they extend their learning beyond the classroom.
Photo: Michael Kevin Daly*

pursuit as it might seem, but you can find a career in the arts.”

Community support of the Americana Project remains strong and is truly a point of pride for the school district and the town of Sisters. “The Americana Program is more than an avenue for students to express themselves,” says Sisters High School Principal Bob Macauley. “It is also a signature program that threads the Sisters community together.” One large component of the program is the students’ exposure to musicians and craftspeople in the community through performances and workshops where young and old learn and teach together. “It is warming to see community members of all ages freely sharing with each other through the medium of music,” says Principal Macauley.

The Project reinforces Sisters’ ethos as a town committed to arts and arts education. “Sisters—the town—has really grabbed on to the idea that cultural tourism and using the arts as a driving force for the economy is really something that can benefit the community,” says Tisdale.

And, thanks to the Americana Project, the next generation of artists stands ready to contribute their voices to the community.

Columbia Gorge Arts in Education: Art Spies

CLASSROOM TEACHERS PROVIDE INNOVATIVE ART RECONNAISSANCE



Artist Jane Essley instructs students how to roll ink during a printmaking lesson at Whitson Elementary School. Their individual pieces were combined into a collaborative work for the new Hood River hospital, helping students engage with the broader community.

IT'S A COMMON QUESTION for arts organizations serving K-12 schools: How can we give the students and schools what they want and need? Moreover, how do we even find out what they need?

For Hood River's Columbia Gorge Arts In Education (CGAIE), serving 20 schools in three Oregon counties and one in Washington, the answer varied widely from school to school. Some schools had active PTAs and frequent arts residencies and others had no art supplies and little support from the administration. Moreover, CGAIE's role in the schools' art curriculum grew.

"We realized that our role was shifting from being a 'random act of art,'" says CGAIE Director, Leith Gaines of their previous function providing arts residencies to the schools, "to now, in a lot of cases, the artists we brought in were the only art these kids were getting."

Building programs that are meaningful for the schools required identifying qualities in schools where Columbia Gorge AIE's programs worked. One constant emerged: strong relationships with teachers in those schools. "If we have a partner in a school that we know is supportive of the arts, then it's really easy to go to that school and make a project or residency work," says CGAIE grant writer Leigh Hancock.

In response, CGAIE started the Arts Advocate Program this year, recruiting fifteen advocates from twenty schools, most of whom are classroom teachers. After a training session in January, the advocates returned to their schools to complete an arts needs assessment of their school and to identify opportunities for further growth. By the next school year, CGAIE and the Art Advocates will have the information necessary to bring to the school boards and administrations to begin to craft an arts program for each individual school.

Advocates also have the opportunity to share information as a group and to build a network between schools to identify and share best practices.

By enlisting eyes and ears in the schools, CGAIE hopes to create a continuity of arts education that many schools lack. "Our goal is to serve our communities better," says Gaines. "The way to do that is to have representatives and voices in the schools to tell us what's going on and what their needs are. We can't be at every school—now we've got someone there to help."



Teaching artist Shelley Toon Height works with elementary students on a mural to be installed at the Hood River Waterfront Park. Photos: Leith Gaines

Pendleton Center for the Arts: Entrepreneurship

ART CLASSES FOR TEENS USE CREATIVE MINDS TO ENCOURAGE EARNING POTENTIAL

There is little success where there is little laughter.
—Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919)

FAMILIES STROLLING through the art gallery, teens plunking guitars in classrooms, shoppers lingering over handmade earrings in the shop, the Pendleton Center for the Arts is full of the creative and entrepreneurial spirit of the building’s original benefactor, industrialist Andrew Carnegie.

“We’re always looking at art as economic development,” says the Center’s Executive Director Roberta Lavadour of their innovative approach to delivering services to youth that not only empower them creatively, but also economically. “The old paradigm was that you’d be a painter and get into a gallery and that was how you made money,” she says. “But with the elevation of craft and the DIY esthetic to fine art, there are so many new outlets to sell what you make.”

This spring, Lavadour taught a class for teens in which they created promotional items and merchandise for their bands: business cards silk-screened onto LP covers they found at thrift stores, buttons, and CD covers and packaging. “It’s exciting to have teenagers thinking about making things and selling them—things that were connected to their bands was a really fun departure point for them,” says Lavadour. Teen bands then perform at the Center and sell their hand-crafted promotional items at the shows to earn money and pay for the rental of the space.

Lavadour’s “merch” class was a part of the Center’s cornerstone program, Art Rock Teens, an after-school program that serves teens 13-18 in Pendleton and throughout the surrounding rural area with free classes created by teens for teens. Art Rock Teens also fills the art education gap in an area where many cash-strapped rural schools operate on four-day-a-week schedules. Offerings range from beginning guitar to skateboard design to digital photography and encourage kids to think beyond creation and expanding the idea of art as a viable career.



Instructor Gregory Dallas (left) helps students fold covers from reclaimed calendar pages as they prepare to package and market CDs of their bands. Photo: Pendleton Center for the Arts

“Selling artwork is a big part of what we do,” says Lavadour of the Fine Craft Gallery in the arts center that represents 15% of its yearly revenues. Sales in the gallery are shared 70/30 with artists receiving 70%. The young students from the teen classes can sell their work in the gallery alongside fine crafts by other area artists.

From Lavadour’s perspective, art and commerce go together like, well, teens and guitars, and it’s an ethos she wants to pass along to the teens who pass through the center’s halls. Andrew Carnegie would be very proud.



It’s exciting to have teenagers thinking about making things and selling them—things that were connected to their bands was a really fun departure point for them.”

—Roberta Lavadour, executive director, Pendleton Center for the Arts

ELI: Strengthening Arts Education

OREGON TEAM CONSIDERS POLICIES AFFECTING TEACHER PREPARATION

WHEN ART, MUSIC, DANCE, and other art specialists disappear from Oregon classrooms, who is left to teach art? Typically, the task falls to a generalist teacher who frequently has little or no pre-service training in the arts. In fact, teachers in Oregon receive varying degrees of arts training based on where they attend college with some meeting only minimum requirements. In districts struggling with the forces of shrinking budgets and falling test scores and without teachers trained in arts, art and its many disciplines simply drop from the curriculum.

“In talking to arts education leaders around the state, an overwhelming majority identified improvements to teacher preparation in the arts as the most practical way to impact students in today’s environment,” says Deborah Vaughn, Education Coordinator for the Oregon Arts Commission. “The idea is to give teachers a solid foundation in the arts to add to their teaching ‘tool kit’ of ways they can help engage each individual student in their classroom.”

To address the issue of Oregon teacher training and preparedness, the Oregon Arts Commission assembled a “dream team” of Oregon leaders to participate in the Education Leaders Institute (ELI), a prestigious three-day workshop in Chicago convened by the National Endowment for the Arts. ELI provides a forum for state leaders from across the country to discuss strategies to strengthen their states’ arts education policies. Oregon’s six-member ELI team includes Rep. Peter Buckley, Oregon House District 5, Ashland; Duncan Wyse, Chair, Oregon State Board of Education; Christine D’Arcy, Executive Director, Oregon Arts Commission; Dr. Tom Manley, President, Pacific Northwest College of Art; Martha Richards, Executive Director, James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation; and Sue Thompson, Director of Field Services and Licensure, Western Oregon University. “This is the highest level leadership team Oregon has ever assembled around arts education. The possibilities are

endless,” says team leader, Christine D’Arcy. “The team is excited to dive into the conversation and see what kind of change we can make for Oregon’s kids.”

The ELI team isn’t the only group looking at building the capacity of Oregon teachers. The Chalkboard Project has been tackling statewide education policy and issues for six years. Chalkboard’s most recent program, the CLASS Project, piloted in three districts, focuses on how effective teaching can be enhanced by relevant professional development, teacher-driven performance evaluation and mentorship opportunities.

“When the Arts Commission came and asked if I wanted to be a part of this, I jumped at the chance,” says team member Representative Peter Buckley (D-Ashland). Buckley plays a key role in the Oregon Legislature as a Co-Chair of the Ways and Means budget committee, but also brings his extensive involvement in theatre to the table. “I see it as essential for us to do—we have to redefine how we’re operating our schools and this is a way of being a part of the conversation.”

From his vantage point in the legislature and his home in Ashland, Rep. Buckley believes strongly in the power of arts education and its effect not only on the students but the community. “You make that investment and you see kids prosper with it,” he says. “It’s that direct—you see it in the kids.” With increased creativity comes business and industry attracted to the innovative energy of the community.

Yet the challenge for the ELI team will be how to best effect change in Oregon schools by focusing on the professionals on the front line: our teachers. “There’s tremendous power not only in having an art specialist but also working with the classroom teachers to give them tools that they wouldn’t get in their traditional training,” says Rep. Buckley. “This can really have a dynamic effect.”

With this high level team on board, the possibilities for affecting teachers and students are powerful.

Rep. Peter Buckley (left) talks with Deb Vaughn (center) and Chris D’Arcy (right) about plans for Oregon’s participation in the 2010 Education Leaders Institute. Buckley and D’Arcy are two of Oregon’s six ELI team members. Photo: Sabina Samiee

