

Curriculum Dept. Newsletter

Special Edition: A Look at the Arts

Volume 2, Issue 4

April 2009

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April

- Math Education Month
- International Children's Book Day (4/2)
- National Library Week (4/12 - 4/18)
- Earth Day (4/22)
- National Safe Kids Week (4/26 - 5/4)

May

- National Physical Fitness and Sports Month
- National Teacher Day (5/5)
- National Music Week (5/3-5/10)
- Children's Literature Week (5/11-5/15)
- Memorial Day (5/25)

Why Teach Music?

Music Education not only enhances a child's academic performance in math and science, it also engenders teamwork, communication and other social skills that are critical to success as an adult. Here are just a few benefits of a music education.

1. Students of the arts learn to think creatively and to solve problems by imagining various solutions, rejecting outdated rules and assumptions. Questions about the arts do not have only one right answer.

2. Recent studies show that students who study music are more successful on standardized tests such as the SAT. They also achieve higher grades in high school.

3. A study of the arts provides children with an internal glimpse of other cultures and teaches them to be empathetic towards the people of these cultures. This development of compassion and empathy, as opposed to development of greed and a "me first" atti-

tude, provides a bridge across cultural chasms that leads to respect of other races at an early age.

4. In music, a mistake is a mistake; the instrument is in tune or not, the notes are well played or not, the entrance is made or not. Through music study, students learn the value of sustained effort to achieve excellence and the concrete rewards of hard work.

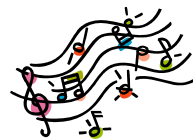
5. Music study enhances teamwork skills and discipline. In order for an orchestra to sound good, all players must work together harmoniously towards a single goal, the performance, and must commit to learning music, attending rehearsals, and practicing.

6. Music provides an outlet for creativity and self-expression. It enables us to express our noblest thoughts and feelings. It engages our imaginations. It allows us to asset our uniqueness. These are very important functions in a world dominated by today's technology.

7. Music study develops skills that are necessary in the workplace. It focuses on "doing," as opposed to observing, and teaches students how to perform, literally, anywhere in the world. Employers are looking for multi-dimensional workers with the sort of flexible and supple intellects that music education helps to create. In the music classroom, students can also learn to better communicate and cooperate with one another.

8. Music performance teaches young people to conquer fear and to take risks. A little anxiety is a good thing, and something that will occur often in life. Dealing with it early and often makes it less of a problem later. Risk-taking is essential if a child is to fully develop his or her potential.

9. An arts education exposes children to the incomparable.



Phil Rich,
Director of Music

Speaking for the Arts

In light of the recent explosion of incompatible viewpoints on how we should formulate graduation requirements, and the disappointing and apparently immutable results presented by the "Stakeholders," I am left wondering. As educators with integrity, what must we do to provide the finest most appropriate education to prepare our youth for a productive rewarding life in the 21st Century?

"The future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind. The era of "left brain" dominance, and the Information Age that it engendered, are giving way to a new world in which "right brain" qualities—inventiveness, empathy, meaning-predominate." That's the argument Daniel Pink presents in his book, *A Whole New Mind*.

The clamor of battle continues within the ranks of educational purveyors of required curriculum components leaving the second wave disciplines scrambling for turf. In the hierarchy of core subject areas, just exactly where do the Arts belong? Is Art a bonifide core subject or just a poor relation to the long standing pillars of traditional education? Is Art a discipline accompanied by the checks and balances of well defined standards? Or are we solely an expressive entity, an indulgence of the heart and spirit?

Former U.S. Commissioner of Education and President of the Carnegie Foundation Ernest Boyer states, **"The arts should be considered in... an intellectual and imaginative context... art stimulates the intellect, and is a way to explore the human spirit... Our children need to see clearly, hear acutely, and feel sensitively through the exquisite**

language of the arts."

As educators we all know that the arts are both a discipline and a vehicle for creative expression, but do the actions of policy makers match the true value of the Arts?



NCLB legislation in 2001 declared that art should be included in what all schools should teach. Art was listed as one of the ten core subjects in public school. In spite of that, few gains in art education are noted. In 2006 and 2008 a Washington DC based independent advocacy agency did a national follow up study on the impact of NCLB. Findings show that 44% of districts had increased elementary Language Arts and Math instruction by cutting back on other subjects. Additionally, music and Art time was cut by 35% in 16% of our school districts! (*March 2009 issue of Edutopia*)

Focus on the traditional core subjects is intended to increase learning as measured by test scores, however, cutting back on arts instruction may actually decrease potential for success. **"There's a lot of evidence that kids immersed in the arts do better in their academic tests... If they're worried about test scores and want to get them higher, they need to give kids more art, not less,"** says Tom Horne, Arizona's State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In an article published in *Edutopia Magazine*, March 2009, staff writer Owen Edwards states, **"Involvement in the arts is associated with gains in math, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking, and verbal skill... Arts learning can also improve motivation, concentration, confidence, and teamwork."**

Cornell University's President David J. Skorton tells us, **"There is growing evidence that arts education improves student learning and thereby produces better citizens... these disciplines nurture our creative instincts."**

As Daniel Pink has suggested, people entering the workforce today need a different skill set than once required. Traditional predictors of success (*high I.Q. and grade point average, Honors and Advanced Placement course work, and excellent standardized Test Scores*) may no longer be enough. Unquantifiable indicators such as creativity, inter-personal skills, and social-emotional capabilities reside in the right side of the brain and are essential components for success in today's world. These skills are effectively engendered by participation in the Arts.

I believe that holistic education combined with ethics and social responsibility are the essential ingredients in producing balanced, well educated people committed to applying their talents and skills to affect the greater good for humanity. I believe, as the research has shown, that art has a positive impact on student learning, and should sit comfortably with equal status amongst the traditional academic pillars.

**Carol Connor, Director of Art
Westbrook School Department**

Spring Music Events



Friday April 10	Jazz Night Concert	7pm @ WHS Cafeteria
Wednesday April 15	Ann Mason-Osann Scholarship Benefit Concert	7pm @ WHS Auditorium
Tuesday May 12	Grade 5-12 All-City Band Concert	7pm @ WHS Gymnasium
Wednesday May 13	Grade 5-12 All-City Chorus Concert	7pm @ WHS Auditorium

GT Programming for the Arts

As the arts are a focus of this newsletter edition, it seemed like a good opportunity to highlight the district's Gifted and Talented Program from the arts perspective.

The State of Maine, through Chapter 104, has determined that all public school districts in the state shall have a gifted and talented program in place for the visual and performing arts for the 2009-2010 school year. While this mandate for both academics and the arts was issued as far back as 1985, for one reason or another full implementation was not required until now.

The Westbrook School Department, under the leadership of Janet Crawford, a number of years ago took on the visual arts challenge and the development of a gifted and talented program grades 3 -8. Within the last year and a half that program has expanded to the high school level, as well as monitoring of students K-2. The district is in the process of introducing a music component for the next school year to be in full compliance with the state.

Who are these arts students? How are they identified? And what type of programming is made available to them?

Chapter 104 defines artistically gifted and talented students as "those students who excel or have the potential to excel, beyond their age peers, in the regular school program, to the extent that they need and can benefit from programs for the gifted and talented. They are students who have exceptional artistic ability as shown by demonstrated significant achievement or potential for significant achievement above their age peers in the visual and/or performing arts."

Students with exceptional artistic ability usually comprise up to five percent of the school population.

Screening and identification of artistically talented students include at least three measures. Examples may include but are not limited to:

- student products: auditions, portfolios, works-in-progress, performances
- student interviews
- teacher referral
- parent referral
- self-nomination
- peer nomination

While a wonderful gifted and talented visual arts program has been in place for many years, the Art Department faculty under the directorship of Carol Connor is in the process of updating and revising the program. Current GT Art teachers, Jean Shorey, Abby Harmon and Melissa Perkins are evaluating the program and along with the entire Art Department making changes that take into account the process and content of the programs throughout the grade spans.

Music Director Phil Rich and the Music Department faculty are developing screening and identification instruments and procedures, as well as discussing programming options for next school year. Many of the programs already in place will be venues for serving musically talented students as they have been for years in the rich tradition here in Westbrook.



For more information regarding gifted and talented in the arts please feel free to contact **Kathy Leggett**, Director of Gifted and Talented, HS Office ext. 489



The Arts in March Youth Art Month 2009



March has been Art-full !

Portland Museum of Art in conjunction with the Maine Art Education Association is currently celebrating its 15th year of showcasing student art. Seven Westbrook students were recently honored at the Reception and Awards Ceremony, Saturday, March 7.

Art teachers Deb Bickford, Cheri Juniewicz, Becky Knox, Melissa Perkins, and Art Director Carol Connor applauded proudly as the students were called to the stage.

Congratulations to the following K-12 students

Showing at the
Portland Museum
of Art:



1. Emma Sperry
2. Glenn Emery
3. Cooper Mullett
4. Susan DeRoche
5. Kelly Wilson
6. Gabrielle Ledue
7. Savanna Jackson
8. Kevin Carignan

PhotoVoice, a Health-

based photography grant has provided a vehicle of expression for G&T Art students from WHS. With collaboration and planning by the directors of G&T, Health, and Art, Mrs. Marice Tran of Portland Public Health has guided Westbrook students in the photo-essay process. Photos and the accompanying commentaries will tell audiences the story of local Health Pros and Cons in our community with the hope of inspiring positive change.



Westbrook Housing invites

K-8 students to illustrate their annual report/calendar with the theme, "What Home Means to Me." **Towanda Brown**, Local potter and basket-maker instructs WJHS students to weave baskets and vessels to express that theme. K-5 is using other media choices.

Westbrook Women's Club Art Show and Competition

took place on Tuesday, March 2nd. Winners artwork will be entered in state level competitions sponsored by Women's clubs of Maine. Members praised the high quality WHS art from Mrs. Stanley and Mrs. Bickford's art classes.

First Place was awarded to Amelia Brackett, 2nd Place to Brenda Wood, 3rd to Aleceia Merry, and Honorable Mention, to Dylan Gillis. Mr. and Mrs. Andy Curran and Ms. Patricia Sundik served as judges. Everyone enjoyed the fine display, ceremony, and refreshments.

MAEA Display features Artwork by Westbrook High School's Jeffrey Hooke. His wire contour self portrait done in the Art I Class was chosen for the postcard notice and invitation to the show. Kevin's work will be professionally framed and on display for one year at the MAEA headquarters in Augusta.



Westbrook Women's Club Exhibitors

K-5 Student Art Show

Canal School

May 12-14

WJHS Student Art Show

May 19-20

Congressional School Art Competition

Sponsored by Congresswoman Chellie Pingree, and the Maine Arts Commission

In response to this request, high school art teachers are submitting digital copies of original art work and photographs by WHS Art students. Chosen entries will be hung in the corridors of the U.S. Capitol Building for one year. Winners and parents will be flown to Washington, D.C. for a reception!