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The Arts|Learning Program for Schools

The Arts|Learning Program for Schools (ALP) supports public elementary schools' efforts to build an instructional focus on learning in and through the arts to improve student literacy, engagement in learning, and academic and personal achievement. The Arts|Learning Program takes into account district whole-school improvement plans, arts and non-arts curriculum, specific school-based priorities, and state/national arts-education standards. Additionally, it provides for a community-service component for high school students.

The model is a unique partnership among public and private institutions including Boston Public Schools, Lesley University, independent high schools with strong arts and public service programs, the Program Evaluation Research Group, and Arts|Learning.

The Arts|Learning Program has two complementary parts, one for students and one for educators:



1. **The ALP Mentorship Program** partners urban elementary school students with arts-talented teens from arts-rich high schools. With guidance from faculty coordinators from each school, students create arts-based projects.
2. **The ALP Professional Development Program** guides educators in the use of the arts as teaching tools through arts-based workshops, artist-in-residencies which model teaching in classrooms, curriculum development, and coaching to help teachers implement arts-integrated curricula of their own design.

Schools may elect to participate in either component singly, or both components together.



The **ALP Mentorship Program** benefits students from both partnering schools by expanding and enriching student world views. Elementary students are exposed to arts-learning opportunities they would not receive otherwise, while high school students learn how to translate their knowledge to build children's skills and confidence in the creation of art.

Elementary schools have used the program to serve a range of purposes, such as:

- supporting learning in the classroom during school hours
- supporting learning in after-school enrichment
- developing student leadership skills.

Several partnering high schools have created “arts and community” courses that enable their students to plan school visits and consider their role as arts mentors over long periods of time. Many high schools use the program to provide thoughtful, long-term community-service opportunities for their students.

The program began in 2000, and has grown to include three Boston elementary schools, each partnering with an independent high school.

Evaluations of the ALP Mentorship Program demonstrate that students have enhanced:

- cognitive skills as they experience art processes, are exposed to art-content skills and techniques, and work in a collaborative environment that requires problem-solving, brainstorming, and communicating ideas
- social skills as they exchange and discuss ideas and work as teams
- perception of themselves as learners as they speak and write about a new belief in their ability to address challenges and be successful



The **ALP Professional Development Program** provides educators with strategies to deepen student learning by integrating all subjects with and through the arts. Master artists and educators from Lesley University faculty and VSA Art Massachusetts offer arts-based workshops, artist-in-residencies to model teaching in classrooms, curriculum development training, and coaching to help teachers independently implement their arts-integrated curriculum. Teachers are trained to use the arts to teach across multiple intelligences, to support the education of English Language Learners and bilingual students, and to bring students’ lives into the curriculum. Student comprehension and literacy skills improve as teachers use the arts to enhance curriculum, to address school priorities and whole-school improvement plans, and to connect with arts and non-arts standards.



Teacher and administrative surveys have indicated that these training opportunities have successfully aligned with school-based initiatives and educational priorities. Teachers have learned new educational strategies, taken on leadership roles, and increased expectations of their students. Students’ skills as musicians, visual artists, dancers, and dramatists, as well as their ability to communicate in speech and writing, have been enhanced as they experience learning that integrates the arts with other academic subjects.

Funding for this work has been provided by numerous local foundations and the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as through nominal fees from participating schools.

For more information on **The Arts|Learning Program for Schools** contact **Arts|Learning** Executive Director Jonathan Rappaport at info@artslearning.org.