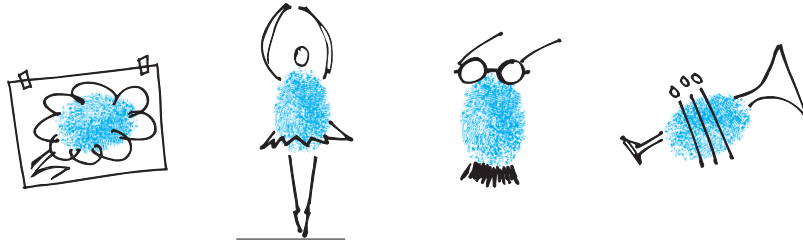



Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education



2004 TAKE PART! COMMUNITY AUDIT PROJECT



The Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education gratefully acknowledges funding support from The Mississippi Arts Commission and the Wallace Reader's Digest Funds



In 2001, The Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network developed and published *A Community Audit for Arts Education: Better Schools, Better Skills, Better Communities*. The audit is a vehicle for encouraging local conversations and community planning that supports arts education. The Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education's *Take Part! Community Audit Project* emphasizes the importance of local citizens taking an active role in advocating high quality arts education for students in K-12 school settings. The goal of the project is to help the selected communities discover and value their local arts education programs and resources and to guide them in developing a procedure for taking action to use audit findings to strengthen K-12 arts education in local schools.

How were the five communities selected?

The MAAE executive committee selected five sites based on criteria of the *Take Part!* Grant initiative funded by the Mississippi Arts Commission. The criteria emphasize planning and evaluation, strengthening community involvement and assessing the potential impact of the project. The five selected communities reflect geographic, economic and human diversity in our state. The host organizations include three school districts and two arts councils. While the five communities are unique, each possesses local resources that can work in partnership with school districts to strengthen K-12 arts education.

The Audit Process – a guide to discovery

In early 2004, the five *Take Part!* communities received \$1000 to cover costs of participation in the project. Each community formed a planning team to determine how to conduct the audit and set a project timeline. MAAE representatives met with each planning team and returned to the site to facilitate a “town meeting.” At the meeting each community reviewed the audit and set a date for individuals to submit completed surveys to the Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education. Survey results were compiled and distributed to a contact person for each community in early September. A findings report was generated to publicize and disseminate audit results. Each of the selected communities set a date to host a *Take Part!* Celebration to showcase student accomplishments in the arts and to receive audit findings.

The Findings Report – a community's response

Questions in the audit lead respondents to evaluate K-12 arts education in their community from the viewpoint of existing policies. Each survey question provides an opportunity for individuals to comment on what is needed to attain “best practice” level in a specific policy. Individuals' comments were synthesized to create the findings report. What is presented in the following pages represents the collective thinking of school administrators, teachers, parents, artists, civic leaders, and citizens who completed the audit.

Next Steps – converting information into action steps

The MAAE challenged each community to establish action steps based on the audit findings. Possibilities include: forming a school/community arts education advisory committee; conducting strategic planning with community partners; reviewing district policies to increase student access to arts education at all grade levels; including arts framework training in teacher professional development programs; engaging local artists in school residencies; establishing partnerships with cultural institutions; exploring external funding opportunities; offering advocacy training for parents and citizens.

COMMUNITY AUDIT FINDINGS – CLEVELAND PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

According to individuals who completed the Community Audit survey questions, these are...

District and broader community strengths:

- Superintendent is recognized as supportive of the arts
- High school arts program includes a band program and a drama teacher
- Whole Schools Initiative grant funding at two elementary schools
- Delta State University Arts programs
- Crosstie Arts Council serves Bolivar County
- Delta Arts Alliance plans to provide a community arts facility and an arts program that could potentially fill gaps in the school programs (fall 2004)
- Delta State University and Bologna Performing Arts Center offer summer programs

Concerns:

- Arts teachers receive 50% of the amount for classroom expenditures (EEF) as classroom teachers
- Arts programs are perceived to have lower priority in the district than sports programs
- Arts teacher positions are vulnerable when funding cuts are expected
- There is limited use of the arts as a bridge for cultural understanding
- When arts classes participate in cultural events, parents are required to pay for it
- Media coverage of arts is often limited to one or two schools rather than district-wide

Needs expressed:

- Locate funding to add the arts to our instructional focus; submit grant proposals
- Develop educational policy that supports arts education including a plan to fund it
- Include the arts in the elementary and the junior high school curriculum
- Implement a policy that includes the arts in K-12th grades and in after-school programs
- Seek funding to include the arts in after-school programs
- Offer choral music instruction to all students
- Provide professional development that includes a research-based connection between arts instruction and student achievement
- Assist principals to understand the value of arts education as a way to enhance learning
- Encourage all educators to use the arts to improve teaching and learning, student motivation, teamwork and problem solving
- Inform the community of the value and importance of arts education
- Encourage arts teachers to pursue professional development opportunities
- Pursue opportunities for students to participate in regional and state competitions
- Train elementary teachers to integrate the arts and learn about multiple intelligences
- Educate and inform parents and the community about the arts programs in the schools
- Connect arts learning experiences in school to the world of real work
- Recruit advocates from all segments of the community to work with the school board and administrators on the quality and availability of education in the arts

**CLEVELAND –
Crossroads of
Culture in the
Mississippi Delta**

**Population:
13,398**

**Delta State
University:
3,200 students**

**“All children need art.
All children need
music. All children
need to experience
live performances of
excellent quality, not
just those who can
afford it.”**



Cleveland Planning Team member, Molly Rushing, listens to comments of Town Meeting participants.

“The arts teach self esteem, refinement and poise and definitely benefit society and the individuals involved.”

- Designate an individual in the district to provide local media with information about student achievements in the arts
- Invite the community to participate in student art exhibitions and performances
- Develop a supportive relationship between the school system, artists and arts organizations
- Establish partnerships with businesses in the community to sponsor artist-in-residence programs in every school

Existing policies that foster best practices in arts education:

- Use of Mississippi’s Visual and Performing Arts Frameworks
- District-wide K-2 policy that uses the arts to build literacy skills

Community Resources for Education and Arts Education cited:

- Delta Arts Alliance
- Delta State University
- Delta State University Art Department Gallery
- Bologna Performing Arts Center
- Crosstie Arts Festival held annually

“Students from Cleveland should be able to achieve [as much] musical knowledge and excellence in the arts as any other school [district] in our state outside the Delta. The arts last a lifetime, sports for just a while during a life span.”

**MERIDIAN –
A Carousel of
Culture**

**Population:
39,518**

**Meridian
Community College:
2,455 students**

COMMUNITY AUDIT FINDINGS – MERIDIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

According to individuals who completed the Community Audit survey questions, these are...

District and broader community strengths:

- The school board is committed to improving arts education in the district (adequate funding remains a challenge)
- Good arts programs exist at the high school level (instrumental and choral music, visual art and drama)
- Choral music was reintroduced into the curriculum at Meridian High School in 2002
- Band classes are offered at middle school, junior high and high school
- Visual art classes available at both junior high schools and the high school
- Gifted classes include arts instruction and creative approaches
- Two out of three respondents agree that the district encourages educators to use the arts to improve teaching and learning, especially for at risk and hard to reach students
- Authentic assessment and rubrics are used in specific art/s programs
- Meridian High School arts department facilities have recently been renovated
- There is a “rich history of performing arts” in the school district
- School Board members seem supportive and have a personal interest in the progression of the arts

- A grant has been written to establish an arts based magnet school for grades 10-12
- Some arts funding has been generated through grant writing or funding requests supported by community agencies
- Local artists in all arts disciplines could train teachers during district staff development
- The district public relations person works closely with local media
- The local media is supportive of student achievement in the arts, especially at the high school and junior college level
- The Mississippi Arts and Entertainment Center may become a new arts education resource

Concerns:

- Emphasis on testing has shifted focus and funding away from the arts
- Loss of 15 year old strings program in 2001
- Level of implementation of arts frameworks varies throughout the schools
- Arts programs are not uniform at elementary schools
- Reduction of arts programs at middle school and junior high (choral music)
- Drama and choral music are not available at the middle school level
- Gifted visual arts programs are in place at some, but not at all of the elementary and middle schools
- Lack of advanced classes in theatre results in a wide range of abilities and interest in high school theatre classes
- A period of restricted legislative funding has placed emphasis on retaining sufficient classroom teacher positions to meet basic needs; there is no funding to add arts teacher positions

Needs expressed:

- Implement some form of arts education in all schools
- Increase the number of certified arts teachers, especially visual art, theatre and chorus
- Incorporate [arts] standards (frameworks) into day-to-day instruction
- Hire an arts coordinator for the school district
- Obtain funding for materials used in visual art instruction and competitions; fees, uniforms and travel expenses associated with arts competitions
- Provide training for elementary and middle school classroom teachers who are expected to integrate the arts, then follow-up to monitor implementation
- Schedule time for the arts in the elementary school
- Provide resource people in each of the arts disciplines to assist classroom teachers who integrate the arts into instruction
- Allocate more time and resources for professional development in arts education
- Share research on the benefits of arts education with policy makers to influence time and funding for arts education
- Persuade policy makers that students working in various art forms are actively engaged in planning, organizing and problem solving
- Seek additional funding to expand district arts programs
- Increase collaboration between the community's cultural agencies and teachers to enhance arts education
- Recognize and use the arts to connect learning experiences to the world of real work
- Improve arts facilities across the district
- Increase collaboration with the community, including structured advocacy efforts

Existing policies that foster best practices:

- Arts supervisors: each secondary school department has a teacher that serves as a vertical chair to disperse information to other teachers or to implement in-service training
- Some visual arts training is available locally through staff development provided by the school district
- GEAR-UP focused this year on 8th grade students and partnered with Meridian Community College for an on-site tour
- The superintendent supports community partnerships with arts and cultural organizations

“If we want children to produce beauty, we need to give them beautiful environments. If we want them to produce art we must introduce them to it. If we want them to be reflective, we must give them the time, place and opportunity... If we truly want to influence the limited experiences of our students, we must increase their positive experiences.”

- Many district arts teachers participate in community arts organizations
- High school arts teachers regularly meet with community college faculty to articulate curriculum

Community Resources for Education and Arts Education cited:

- Meridian Arts Council
- Meridian Museum of Art
- Meridian Community College
- Meridian Little Theatre



“More community involvement and working together as a whole needs to be a priority in order to bring about positive change for the future of the arts, especially with the upcoming Performing Arts Center.”

OXFORD –
A nice place to live

Population:
12,487

University of Mississippi:
11,068 students

COMMUNITY AUDIT FINDINGS – OXFORD ARTS COUNCIL

According to individuals who completed the Community Audit survey questions, these are...

District and broader community strengths:

- School district offers an instrumental music program that includes band and strings
- Parents and community offer generous support of high school drama program and middle and high school band programs
- University of Mississippi offers some arts education professional development for teachers
- Local arts council and local education endowment supports individual teacher requests
- When adequate facilities are being planned, the arts are part of the discussion
- Yoknapatawpha Arts Council works with schools to coordinate arts education efforts including work with at risk students and Boys and Girls Club, and to connect artists with schools
- Some school PTAs have purchased art prints for use in the school

Concerns:

- The arts should be perceived as “more than just extra curricular activity”
- Focus on athletics overshadows efforts in arts education
- Community has not made arts education a priority when addressing school needs
- Changes in school principal positions increase the need for arts education advocacy
- Arts teachers are overwhelmed with responsibility for teaching and promoting programs
- Community diversity is not reflected in school district arts program enrollment
- High school and after-school programs need support of parent organizations such as PTA

Needs expressed:

- Expand theatre and music electives for junior high and high school students
- Discourage school counselors from using visual art classes as a “dumping ground” for disinterested and problem-causing students

“Give them the money and they [principals] will do arts.”

- Budget sufficient funding for equipment, tools, facilities and resources to inspire excellence in arts education
- Open music, drama and art classes to all students, not just the academically gifted
- Efforts to integrate arts into the elementary curriculum need additional support
- Utilize arts education as a means to teach/learn about other cultures and to help students understand their own culture
- Encourage participation in awards programs and competitions such as PTA Reflections
- Improve public awareness of student achievement and excellence in the arts through local media coverage and communication with parents and the broader community
- Improve opportunities for professional development in the arts for teachers and school leaders
- Encourage teacher participation in professional development opportunities
- Pursue means for teachers to obtain professional development through the university
- Build classrooms that are designed to meet the needs of each individual arts discipline
- Persuade school leaders to raise awareness of arts education programs in the community
- Request public statements about the importance of the arts from district superintendent
- Increase parental support, involvement and arts advocacy
- Promote arts education as a part of existing after-school programs
- Encourage artists and cultural organizations to approach school leaders with their ideas
- Work with PTA to improve community involvement and advocacy for arts programs
- Convince the community to become advocates for the arts
- Organize parents who support the arts to present a unified voice of support
- Identify arts advocates to attend school board/parent meetings
- Promote advocacy for arts education within such groups as PTA and civic groups that support education efforts
- Increase citizen awareness of school district policies in arts education; increase involvement in school board membership and decision-making processes
- Balance support of sports programs with support of arts programs
- Consider developing partnerships between schools and local cultural organizations to promote artist residencies and student access to working artists

“I don’t know if there is a written policy [for arts as a core subject]. I do know that art, music and drama are considered integral by the community in grades 7-12.”

Existing policies that foster best practices in arts education:

- All students in grades 2-6 receive visual art and music instruction once/week taught by certified arts specialists
- An after-school art program is offered to 5th and 6th grade students who are in band or strings, and therefore unable to take art during the day
- Summer arts programs are offered by the arts council and the university museum system

Community Resources for Education and Arts Education cited:

- University of Mississippi
- Yoknapatawpha Arts Council
- Local education endowment
- Local artists and performers

“Our school district really needs a full-time grant writer. Lots of education funding is now available through grants.”

“I think the public at large (and some principals and administrators) does not understand the role that the arts can play in a child’s education.”

“The arts truly help meet students at all levels of learning.”

**PICAYUNE –
100 years young
and still growing**

**Population:
10,651**

COMMUNITY AUDIT FINDINGS – PICAYUNE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

According to individuals who completed the Community Audit survey questions, these are...

District and broader community strengths:

- The superintendent is a strong advocate for K-12 arts education
- Survey respondents acknowledge awareness of and support for arts education from the superintendent and the school board
- A new after-school program supports and supplements school day instruction
- The school district is supported by PTA, other civic groups and local media

Concerns:

- There should be a detailed plan for a more focused arts program implemented district wide; more integrated curriculum
- Full implementation of a district wide arts program will require additional facilities
- Students and parents are required to conduct fundraisers to facilitate participation in competitions (band, chorus, show choir, theatre)
- High school arts classes are too crowded; some students are turned away

Needs expressed:

- Develop a comprehensive plan for arts education in the district with input from the arts and cultural organizations in the community
- Increase funding for arts programs K-6
- Employ visual art teachers at the elementary level
- Employ more arts teachers, especially dance and theatre
- Increase number of visual art teachers and courses offered at the high school; consider developing an arts track
- Offer more arts in after-school program and add a summer camp
- Train all teachers to integrate the arts; put arts framework in every teacher's hands
- Adopt an integrated arts curriculum district wide



Picayune Mayor, Greg Mitchell visits with members of the Town Meeting Planning Team in January 2004.

- Conduct arts education professional development for all teachers that includes visiting artists (local and others), arts integration strategies, arts/literacy connections, cultural connections and resources for each discipline
- Assist teachers' "comfort level" with arts integration through professional development
- Include teachers in planning for professional development
- Train teachers to use the arts as the foundation for learning about other cultures and to help students understand their own culture
- Incorporate Thursday enrichment into school day; expand after-school to other sites
- Increase teacher and student participation in programs that recognize student achievement in the arts (advanced placement courses, honor choirs, competitions, etc.)
- Consider hiring certified P.E. teachers who could incorporate dance into their courses
- Hire teachers who have arts backgrounds; offer arts training to newly hired teachers
- Designate an arts coordinator at each school to help integrate the arts effectively
- Provide teachers with feedback and/or encourage reflective practices for teachers to evaluate their own progress in integrating arts education into their classrooms

**“Change takes
time, and is not
always easy.”**

- Incorporate lessons using various arts disciplines to engage hard-to-reach and at-risk students (do not punish these students by taking arts away)
- Establish a method to measure implementation of professional development training
- Distribute research on the impact of arts education on student success to building principals, school board, faculty team leaders, parent groups
- Make teachers aware of funding issues, grant opportunities, how to access/obtain funds
- Examine scheduling practices and consider revisions that would accommodate team planning and interdisciplinary coordination
- Increase number of school and community advocates working with school leaders to increase funding for the arts
- Invite community members to the school who can illustrate use of the arts to connect learning experiences to the world of “real work”
- Organize an arts council that could serve as a liaison between school and community

Existing policies that foster best practices...

- The school district actively seeks funding to support and expand arts education
- Arts in the Classroom grant award received; other grant applications submitted
- A grant provides funding for an elementary after-school program that includes visual art
- Teams of teachers have received professional development training in arts integration and have returned to train faculty colleagues
- The district promotes teacher training in the arts by funding teachers’ participation in workshops
- All students go to elementary music class once or twice a week; band is offered in 6th grade
- A student-created 6th grade opera encourages teamwork and problem solving
- Arts education supervisors are in place at the junior high and high school level
- Seventy-two percent of respondents reported that arts specialists are encouraged to pursue professional development in their art form
- Ninety-six out of 110 respondents said the district encourages teachers to use the arts to improve teaching and learning
- Survey respondents express a desire to maintain existing arts education programs and build on them, adding new ones “to allow the district to compete among the best”
- Building renovations at the junior high and high school will accommodate arts programs

Community Resources for Education and Arts Education cited:

- Picayune On Stage
- Local church choirs welcome K-12 youth
- Local clubs and organizations volunteer in the schools

“A comprehensive plan K-12 needs to be implemented to promote and build literacy.”

“Students need preparation that will afford them the opportunity to compete in the ever-growing demand for wide-based knowledge and experience.”



STONE COUNTY –

Population:
13,622

**Mississippi Gulf
Coast Community
College:**
6,329 students

COMMUNITY AUDIT FINDINGS – STONE COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL

According to individuals who completed the Community Audit survey questions, these are...

District and broader community strengths:

- Award-winning high school arts program
- School district faculty includes some highly qualified arts teachers
- An after-school program is in place in Stone County School District
- Stone County Arts Council supports strong arts education in the schools in addition to support for the arts in the community
- Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College arts programs and facilities

Concerns:

- There is little or no collaboration between the district and local arts and cultural organizations when setting arts education policy
- A focus on test scores pushes the arts “to the back burner”
- Students are not exposed to ways the arts are used in the world of real work
- Members of the community are not aware of school district policies in the arts
- Community members have limited awareness of arts resources in Stone County

Needs expressed:

- Include input from community arts and cultural organizations in the school district plan for arts education
- Hire more certified arts teachers, especially at the elementary school and middle school; seek continuity in arts education from kindergarten through twelfth grades
- Increase administration support and involvement in arts education
- Hire a district arts supervisor
- Increase access to arts education by providing training for K-8 classroom teachers
- Highlight connection between successful arts education and successful students to build community and school district support for improving arts education
- Increase funding, provide classroom space, improve planning, provide supplies
- Include arts education in existing after-school program
- Increase community support for arts education programs and policies in school district
- Implement arts integration across the curriculum
- Improve local publicity and coverage of school arts events
- Increase community awareness and involvement, identify local arts advocates
- Use PTA programs and school events to educate the public about the value of the arts in education
- Create a structure for local citizens and organizations to participate in arts education advocacy and policy development in the schools and community
- Build a community center that could serve schools and citizen groups in multiple ways

“I believe that the arts are needed at an early age to provide for all aspects of betterment of life...the interest is here and the heart is here for the arts.”



Stone County citizens respond to the audit survey questions at the Town Meeting in March 2004.

- Arts council needs to research, identify and publicize local arts resources
- Develop school and community partnerships to increase access to arts education

Existing policies that foster best practices in arts education:

- Use of certified teachers to teach high school arts courses
- A few students who excel in the arts participate in a senior project
- Participation of Stone County citizens in A Community Audit for Arts Education; excellent attendance at “Town Meeting”

Community Resources for Education and Arts Education cited:

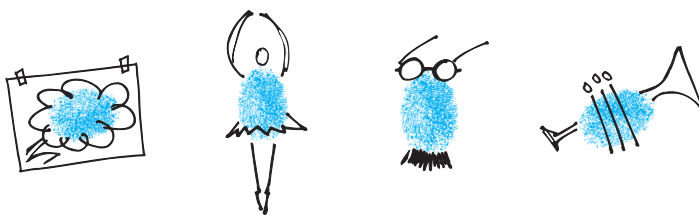
- Professionally trained artists who could offer professional development for teachers
- Stone County Arts Council
- Stone County Enterprise
- Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College
- Local artists use their shops to host arts events for community participation
- Local art gallery has a monthly show and open house
- Summer arts camp offered at community college

“People need to be taught that the arts are for everyone, no matter what social class they fall into. Just because the arts are not specifically required or tested, people assume that they are not important.”

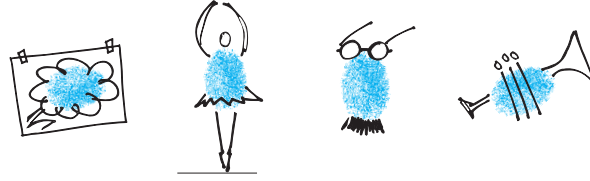
“Get on school board and board of supervisors.” A response to a question about how community advocates may communicate with the school board and school officials on the quality and availability of education in the arts.

“The community is in severe need of a facility that can be accessed by all types of the arts. The only stage of any consequence is at the high school and it only seats about 200. I have heard parents complain that since their kid is in the production the parents should not have to pay to get in. I have NEVER heard anyone complain about the ticket prices for ball games.”

“First, as a community, we need to query the board on their position on the arts, then proceed in the direction needed to keep and add to the arts already established in the schools.”



Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education



The Mission of the Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education is to advocate for high quality, comprehensive and sequential arts education for all Mississippi students.

The Goals of the MAAE are to:

- serve as a common source of information and point of interaction concerning arts education for K-12 and higher education units, community and professional arts groups, the Department of Education and the Mississippi Arts Commission
- raise the awareness of the general public concerning arts education issues
- provide opportunities for collaboration and build partnerships among arts organizations
- cultivate legislative and governmental connections that promote the arts
- recognize and celebrate excellence in arts education throughout the state.

The Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education is a member of the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network



The MAAE works in partnership with the Mississippi Arts Commission and the Mississippi Department of Education

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