

Synopsis of *A Gathering of Good Dinner & Discussion*

Topic: The Necessity of the Arts in Education

May 11, 2009

The grassroots movement for creative, innovative education

*requires strong, vocal advocates at every place in the system,
because we cannot wait for policy change.*

What we know:

- The Arts offer multiple paths to success and accommodate a range of learning styles.
- Learning should be active, not passive.
- The arts allow cultural traditions to be expressed in a healthy, positive way in our most diverse schools.
- A strong community plus a strong administration equals success.
- Arts education should be available to all students, no matter where they or what school they attend.

Observations and ideas generated from the discussion:

- The grassroots movement for creative, innovative education requires strong, vocal advocates at every place in the system, because we cannot wait for policy change.
- Rally the support of teachers and parents. Educate them on the arts as a vital part of education and share the research. Mobilize parents to pressure school boards to hire more arts specialists and increase offerings at all grade levels.
- High quality, open format art instruction teaches problem solving where multiple solutions are both possible and desired.
- Several participants were surprised to learn that the arts are mandated as part of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), but there is no clear way to assess achievement in the arts.
- New teachers often have not had extensive arts education and arts course requirements for licensure are at a bare minimum.
- To make up for lost ground with NCLB accountability movement, participants called for finding more courageous teachers who are open to new ways of teaching and using integrated curriculum that requires students to present what they know, to create art to describe what they are learning, and to perform to teach others.
- Measure Divergent Thinking: the capacity to think non-logically, analogically and associatively. We need to figure out how to measure the results of participatory, creative, risk-taking education that results in the type of “open architecture” that spawns creative thinking and permits students to dream.
- How adults model a creative life has a fundamental impact on how children view the importance of the arts in community/society.
- Motivation is difficult to institutionalize. It is more likely to come from a passionate, expert teacher than a particular system or approach that can be widely implemented.
- Strong, consistent leadership from a variety of sources (teachers, administrators, community members) is vital for an arts-integrated approach to curriculum.
- Support the work of, and appropriately compensate, passionate art teachers, specialists and administrators implementing an integrated approach to learning.
- Volunteerism and partnerships with local organizations, universities and advocacy groups extends opportunities for students, builds strong community networks and fills in gaps in school programming.

How Metropolitan Family Service is bridging the gap:

MFS integrates arts education in all 23 of its after school programs offered at elementary and middle schools high poverty neighborhoods. Beyond all sorts of music and art skills, students learn teamwork, math, performance/public speaking skills, community service and develop cultural understanding. Classes include Hmong break dancing, Hula, Mexican Folk and East Indian Dancing; mural making; creative writing, drawing, painting, videography, clay, drama and stage design, and unique musical instruments (e.g., marimba, mandolin, computerized). MFS volunteers and staff also provide tutoring and mentoring in over 60 Portland area schools. Last year, more than 17,000 children received help through Metropolitan Family Service.

Measurable Results:

- Last year more than 7,000 children were enrolled in Metropolitan Family Service after school programs, which offer a wide variety of arts education opportunities.
- Students who regularly attend MFS after school programs scored higher on state tests than those who are not enrolled, and significantly increased their math and reading scores.
- Teachers reported that 77% of enrolled students had more positive attitudes; 76% improved their academic performance 73% participated more in class.

Action steps to continue the conversation:

- Talk to 6 other people about your AGOG Dinner & Discussion experience.
- Articulate the importance of arts in education to your respective school board.
- Volunteer in your neighborhood school. Offer to lead a class art project that illustrates an idea from math, science, or literature.
- Host an AGOG Dinner & Discussion at your home.
- Support Metropolitan Family Service after school, child and family programming by attending the ***A Gathering of Good*** benefit for Metropolitan Family Service on Saturday evening, **October 24, 2009** at the Portland Hilton Grand Ballroom.

Thinking outside of the box



Participants from one of the discussion groups proposed the following:
Approach a school with a cadre of volunteer math teachers who are willing to teach math after school from 3 to 5 pm and ask the principal to replace the in-school math program with art...then watch the math scores rise!

You know a discussion was good when you leave with more questions:

- How best can we give children the opportunity to explore the arts and creativity?
- Are schools factories (sit in neat rows, memorize important facts, repeat important facts)? How best can we teach them to be creative thinkers?



Metropolitan
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We invite you to continue this conversation on our facebook page. Go to <http://www.facebook.com>. Click the "Groups" tab, then type ***A Gathering of Good*** in the search box. In order to participate, you will need to join facebook. If you attended the dinner discussion, you received an email invitation to join facebook.

Because together, we can do more.