

# The Arts Go to School in Rural Pennsylvania

Arts in Education, now in its twelfth year, is still going strong because educators, local artists, and community members believe in the importance of the arts.



*Sponsored in part by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, storyteller Joe McHugh weaves a little magic for youngsters in one of many arts experiences coordinated by Arts in Education staff.*

This article is about a team, not a football or a baseball team, but an arts team. Made up of educational leaders, artists, community members, university faculty, teachers, students, board members, and an Arts in Education staff, this team is working to improve the quality of life and education for students through the arts. School improvement is not a new idea; what is new is using the arts as a catalyst to help schools work toward excellence.

The Arts in Education team's primary goals are: (1) to develop an awareness of the important roles of the arts in education; (2) to provide quality experiences for students in the visual arts, music, dance, drama, and creative writing; (3) to promote the use of community/university arts resources in the schools; and (4) to diversify and extend existing curriculums through inservice education and development of curriculum materials.

#### **Program History**

The Arts in Education Program began because one man, the late I. B. Nolan, then Assistant Executive Director of Central Intermediate Unit 10, walked away from a Pennsylvania Department of Education Summer Arts Academy *inspired*. During that week in the early 1970s Nolan had painted, acted, danced, written poetry, and made music. He learned *about* the arts, gained an understanding of the world *through* the arts, and expanded his knowledge by participating *in* the arts.

Through his leadership, an Arts in Education Development Committee was formed at Central Intermediate Unit 10 in rural central Pennsylvania. Administrators, art and music teachers, and faculty from Lock Haven University and the Pennsylvania State University began meeting in 1972 to develop an idea that would expand and enrich existing arts curriculums and improve schools in area districts.

The committee's proposal received funding in 1976 through ESEA Title IV-C. Although the expected life span of that project was three years for elementary schools, it was expanded to five years. From 1979-1981, the Arts in Education program staff received three ESEA Title IV-C grants, which supplemented school districts' contributions and other funding sources.

During fall 1984, to develop the cultural climate of the area, Central Intermediate Unit 10 entered a formal partnership agreement with the Pennsylvania State University's College of Arts and Architecture for the continuation and expansion of arts in education for kindergarten through twelfth grades. The most successful components of each project conducted from 1976-1981 form the current Arts in Education Program. Now in its twelfth year of operation, the program is supported by funding from six school districts and two private schools and through federal, state, public, and private funding sources obtained by program staff. While Arts in Education has served elementary schools since 1976,

**“Made up of educational leaders, artists, community members, university faculty, teachers, students, board members, and an Arts in Education staff, this team is working to improve the quality of life and education for students through the arts.”**

**“Program staff and the advisory committee believe that the people in schools should define their own educational philosophies for inclusion of the arts in the curriculum.”**

expansion into secondary schools, in particular the senior high schools, is in its infancy. Approximately 23,300 students, 1,500 teachers, 37 elementary, and 21 secondary schools now participate in the program.

#### **Program Organization**

Imagine the setting for this arts program—a large, widespread area with roads so rural that markers do not exist, dusty coal trucks, small isolated towns, high unemployment, and few, if any, cultural institutions or opportunities outside the university towns. Visualize also artists who, to provide outreach art programs, cut through thick layers of fog in the fall, glide onto icy school parking lots in the winter, and in the spring, face torrential rains. Why? Because our local artists care. Further, their dedication is contagious, and artists from across the state share and extend their expertise far beyond contracted service agreements.

Arts in Education is administered by one full-time director, one full-time secretary, and three part-time county area representatives. These staff members are assisted by community/university volunteers and an advisory committee composed of administrators, arts specialists, teachers, a student, a school board/community member, and community/university artists or faculty. All central coordination occurs at an office provided by the Pennsylvania State University on campus.

Working from formal and informal needs assessments, program staff members identify arts programs and activities to meet the six school districts' needs. In addition, for the six districts they coordinate, manage, facilitate, evaluate, document, publicize, develop curriculum-related materials, raise funding, provide technical/consulting services, and network with state and national agencies.

The advisory committee members, in turn, network within the local school district and actively assist with the arts services provided in their schools. They act as local district arts advocates, leaders, coordinators, and evaluators. Their other varied responsibilities include coordinating each school's plans, attending arts programs/field trips, making arrangements for infusing arts resources into the individual schools, and overseeing dissemination/evaluation procedures.

#### **Arts Services**

Arts in Education provides six basic services to participating school districts: inservice, artist resources, field trips, special education, arts exhibits, and curriculum materials. Program staff recognize that teachers already work painstakingly and diligently to expand or enrich their existing arts curriculums. This arts program serves such teachers and supplements, not supplants, what they have accomplished.

**“Arts in Education provides six basic services to participating school districts: inservice, artist resources, field trips, special education, arts exhibits, and curriculum materials.”**

*Inservice.* Each year inservice courses are designed and conducted both for state credit and noncredit situations. Such courses seek to develop teachers' confidence in using the arts while increasing their knowledge and skills. Occasionally, program staff compile completed field-tested lessons in a teacher exchange bulletin. Informal staff development occurs through artist resource materials and related programs and events.

*Artist resources.* Program staff compile local and statewide artist resources in a flyer and present copies to area schools each September. Typically, 15-20 residencies, performances, and programs/activities are scheduled for the 58 schools of participating districts. Such programs are partially funded by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the Arts in Education Program, local schools, and various outside sources. Special project funds from the National Endowment for the Arts also helped during 1986-87. Throughout that year 307 programs in dance, drama, music, visual arts, or creative writing reached an audience of over 92,000 students K-12, with some students involved more than once.

Each year program staff compile teacher/administrator comments for all artist resources. Computer pie chart evaluations illustrate the degree of excellence of the program's content, length, and overall quality, and students' responses to it. Teachers list specific benefits for students and general comments in order to further evaluate the effectiveness of the arts program.

Individual teachers seeking artist resources and other arts services in conjunction with units of study/curriculum may contact the program staff. A "Volunteer Artist/Resources for Schools" program is available to meet such needs.

*Field trips.* Arts-related field trips remain a valuable supplement to continuing learning experiences. Since 1978, through funding from the Center for the Performing Arts/Artist Series and the Friends of the Museum of Art, an estimated 5,000 students K-12 attended programs in Eisenhower Auditorium or were guided through the Museum of Art on the Pennsylvania State University campus. Selected students from 58 schools attended jazz performances or saw a theatrical production. Other schools toured museums on the Pennsylvania State University campus.

District and interdistrict exchange programs that promote informal staff development through field trips are another part of this service. Teachers exchange ideas and expertise as they plan for the program. Exemplary arts programs by students in music, drama, creative writing, and visual arts are shared.

A National Endowment for the Arts Special Project grant expanded field trips for secondary schools during 1986-87. These funds helped transport 900 students and/or pay for their tickets to Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The Pennsylvania State University Resident Theatre Company worked in an intense cooperative effort with the Arts in Education Program to provide this unique curriculum-enrichment experience for gifted/talented and advanced placement English students. Funds from the National Endowment for the Arts also helped defray costs for developing curriculum-related preparation and follow-up materials for this and other secondary arts programs.

*Special education services.* Arts services for special education are administered through Project PASE (Programs in the Arts for Special Education). Project PASE is a cooperative effort with the Special Education Program of Central Intermediate Unit 10.

**“Despite declining enrollments, shrinking budgets, and stress on other curriculum areas, this team of arts-oriented people has managed to do whatever is necessary to sustain this popular program.”**

**“Arts in Education is one example of how educators from diverse school districts, communities, and universities in a rural setting formulated an idea, found start-up funding, and continue to cooperate and often struggle to keep an arts enrichment program in place.”**

With funding from the statewide Arts in Special Education Project of Pennsylvania, Project PASE, serving as a model site, sponsors a one-credit classroom demonstration inservice for teachers of special education students each year. All of the arts have been integrated into classrooms and curriculums. Very Special Arts Festivals usually culminate each year's arts activities.

In addition, the Arts in Education staff organize and manage dissemination of information, recruitment, and identification of gifted/talented students for the Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Arts scholarships. Upon request, consultation, staff development, or resource programs are provided for all teachers and students, including both gifted and hand-capped.

*Arts exhibits.* Four exhibits are presently touring school districts served by the Arts in Education Program. The first of these exhibits is a collection of student works developed and assembled by the students K-12. The second exhibit, the result of the 1986 Very Special Arts Festival, is a collection of banners made by special education students. The third exhibit is a collection of local artists' works, and a fourth exhibit features artwork created by Central Intermediate Unit 10 art teachers.

*Curriculum materials.* As preparation and follow-up for performing groups' visits to schools or field trips, arts-related curriculum materials are made available to teachers. Teacher handbooks are written, edited, typed, designed, illustrated, printed, and disseminated in advance of each program.

In addition to these six basic services, many special projects have been implemented through the Arts in Education Program. They include a summer arts enrichment program for gifted/talented students, a mobile museum for secondary schools, and the use of local artists as "motivators" for teaching the curriculum. Most recently, the project APPLES (Art for Parents and Pupils—A Link to Educational Services), initially funded by the

National Endowment for the Arts, will continue with local Arts in Education Program funding. This special project developed "arts-aware teams" composed of parents, pupils, teachers, administrators, or school board members working together to plan and implement arts programs for secondary schools.

### **Cooperation the Key to Success**

Arts in Education exists because of people who work cooperatively to make the program a success. Program staff and the advisory committee believe that the people in schools should define their own educational philosophies for inclusion of the arts in the curriculum. They also believe that parents should be involved in brainstorming, developing ideas, and planning program operation and assessment.

Arts in Education is one example of how educators from diverse school districts, communities, and universities in a rural setting formulated an idea, found start-up funding, and continue to cooperate and often struggle to keep an arts enrichment program in place. The benefits for students are many and varied, including enhanced self-esteem; improved concentration, imagination, verbal and nonverbal means of communication; and joyful experiential learning. Despite declining enrollments, shrinking budgets, and stress on other curriculum areas, this team of arts-oriented people has managed to do whatever is necessary to sustain this popular program. In the process, they have changed attitudes toward the arts and their importance to the full development of every student. □

*Author's note:* A similar report was published in *Public Policy and Arts Administration Annual Proceedings Paper #1*. Reston, Va.: Public Policy and Arts Administration Affiliate, National Art Education Association, 1986.

**Shirley Sturtz-Davis** is Director of Central Intermediate Unit 10 Arts in Education Program, 102 Visual Arts Bldg., Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802.

Copyright © 1987 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.