

Rural Arts Education: A Dynamic Force in a Small Appalachian Community

In an effort to overcome socioeconomic challenges in a rural Appalachian school area, the Copper Basin Learning Center has effectively implemented arts education in a local school setting.

The integration of the arts within the school curriculum has significantly transformed students' perceptions of place and self and empowered responsible, innovative thinking in the learning community. This Rural Arts Education panel will examine the underlying obstacles and basic assumptions concerning inclusion of the arts in a small rural school or school system, share lessons learned over the years, and outline the development of a plan of action. Discussions will encompass the necessity and methods for including learning standards (with student samples and illustrations provided) and the incorporation of family and community involvement. Consideration will be given to finding funding in a low socioeconomic area and the expanding future of an arts education model in a competing global economy. The CBLC is a grassroots approach to extend, enrich, and empower education for students and community; the Learning Center's focus topic areas are: Technology, Environment, Art, Culture, and Heritage. (T.E.A.C.H.)

The Arts as a Teaching Tool and the Power of Collaboration and Co-teaching

Over the last seventeen years, an arts education initiative has transformed the dynamics of an isolated rural school into a model for rural arts access.

Three teachers from Copper Basin High School began an avalanche of possibilities in 1997 when the Annenberg Rural Challenge Grant provided funding to begin a new era in a small rural school. Isolated by geographical boundaries and stifled by economical hardships since the closing of the copper mines in 1988, something had to be done. After a series of teacher in-services for visual strategies (using art as a teaching tool reflective of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences), followed with collaborations between teachers and art consultants, students were led to a deeper understanding through problem solving, critical thinking, and creative explorations. After this experiment proved successful, in a grassroots self-supporting survival move, a non-profit organization was established and grants were obtained to continue and expand the work. In 2004, an unexpected corporate partnership with Glenn Springs Holdings, Inc. was established to provide funding and support to develop the Copper Basin Learning Center. This session examines the path that led to the Learning Center, challenges faced along the way, and what works in the program and why. There is a lot of talk on the educational forefront today concerning moving from STEM to STEAM, with the arts being a significant component. Discussion will include dispelling basic assumptions and developing a workable plan of action for incorporating the arts in the school curriculum.

Facilitating Standards-Based Learning Through Arts Education

With the incorporation of the arts, participants in the Copper Basin Learning Center are provided with experiences and opportunities to apply knowledge while demonstrating critical thinking and problem solving, effective oral and written communication, collaboration, and proficiency in technology and multimedia through a variety of contexts.

While students are enjoying the benefits of 21st century learning without some of the confines of the general education setting, accountability is important in the public school setting. Many subject area teachers, with end of course testing, desire standards for lesson planning and justification for participation. This section details how teachers in non-tested and tested core subject areas are collaborating with art instructors and multimedia teachers to fulfill the requirements of standards-based learning and assessments. Explore this program's approach to facilitating standards-based learning and discover how rural Appalachian students are developing an appreciation for the arts, sharing their works with real world audiences, and enjoying themselves in the process.

Benefits of the Arts Integration Model in the Community

Learn how the arts can extend beyond the walls of a classroom setting and reach into the local community.

Arts education reaches beyond the student and into the community as a whole. Because of the establishment of the Learning Center, creativity and kindness have merged into projects serving students, students' families, and local government and citizens alike. Student art exhibits and talent shows have bridged gaps between their success, parental support and their involvement. Nursing home residents have been adorned with cards hand-made and delivered by our students, as well as teddy bears donated by people all across the community. Murals and quilt squares for the Appalachian Quilt Trail Project have been painted by our students which now adorn our small town and celebrate our heritage. In this session, we will discuss the benefits of having a program like the Learning Center, which can enhance community connections all in the name of creativity.

Moving Forward: Funding and the Future

The next step in the Learning Center's progress is to build a combination school-community art center.

The expansion of an arts education program into its own bricks and mortar, art center structure, provides both funding challenges and exciting opportunities for future educational goals. This panel will discuss how the Learning Center has thrived through the years and plans to build on its successes. Discussions will also include the Learning Center's plans to evolve into a credit-based learning community that will also include

adult vocational skill training along with the continuation and enhancement of a solid sequential arts education. This session will explain methods for cultivating program support and provide information and leads for obtaining grants and funding. Participants will leave with guidelines and tools for guidance in implementing the arts in the school and community and improving the educational future for all students involved.

BIOS

Angie Cook serves as the Coordinator of the Copper Basin Learning Center and as its Arts Education Consultant and Teaching Artist. She has three decades of experience in arts education including: K-12 public schools, private lessons, and Blue Ridge Mountain Arts Association. Through Georgia Council for the Arts and Tennessee Arts Commission she served as Artist-in-Residence in schools throughout the two states. Her artworks include fine art pencil drawings, sculpture, and murals.

Angila Barker, a member of the Board of Directors of the Copper Basin Rural Community Association and a special education teacher at Copper Basin High School, is a native and lifelong resident of the mountains of east Tennessee. She has Bachelor of Science in Special Education and a Masters and Education Specialist degree in Curriculum and Instruction. Angila performs with her family's bluegrass band at various entertainment venues as well as television and radio stations.

Jennifer Danner is also a native of the Copper Basin, born and raised in Ducktown, TN. As a visual artist, photographer, musician and writer, she serves as Assistant Coordinator at Copper Basin Learning Center and as Marketing Consultant for the Blue Ridge Mountains Arts Association. She will soon be listed on the teaching roster with the Tennessee Arts Commission.

Steven R. Tompkins is the Executive Director of the Copper Basin Rural Community Association, a non-profit 501(c)(3) that directly supports a number of programs within Copper Basin Schools and the surrounding community. Steve is the Technology Teacher and IT Director at Copper Basin High School, and also Contributing Consultant at the Blue Ridge Community Theater.